THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

# retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTEN



## MASTER SYSTEM

EVERYTHING YOU EVER NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT SEGA'S 8-BIT CONSOLE

THE MAKING OF...

## RESCUE ON FRACTALUS

THE STAR WARS PITCH THAT LAUNCHED AN ATARI 2600 CLASSIC AND LUCASARTS



WWW.RETROGAMER.NET

THE MAKING OF...

## JAMES POND

"WE THREW AROUND A FEW NEW SPOOF NAMES, AND SWIFTLY HIT UPON ROBOCOD"

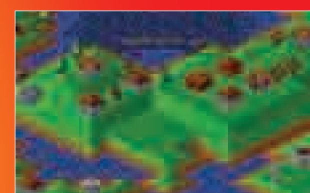
CONVERSION CAPERS

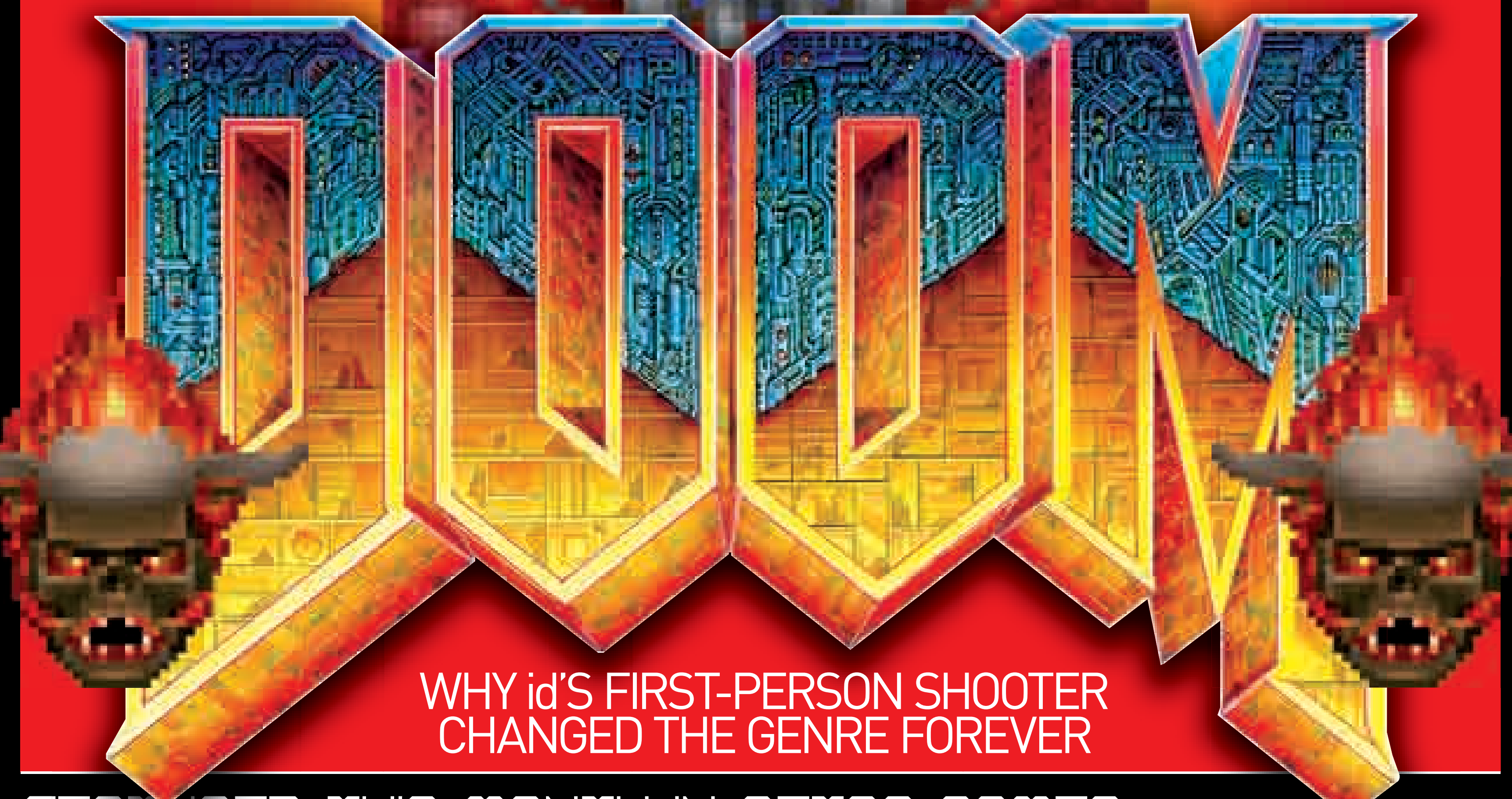
## GREEN BERET

HOW JOFFA SMITH TURNED KONAMI'S COIN-OP INTO A SPECTRUM SUPER HIT

## POPULOUS

CHARTING THE LENGTHY DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD'S VERY FIRST GOD GAME






WHY id'S FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER CHANGED THE GENRE FOREVER

FEATURED THIS MONTH IN RETRO GAMER

**SUPER METROID**
NINTENDO'S ICONIC BLASTER FINALLY ARRIVES ON THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE

**SCUBA DIVE**
EXPLORE ONE OF THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST OCEANS IN DURELL'S UNDERWATER HIT

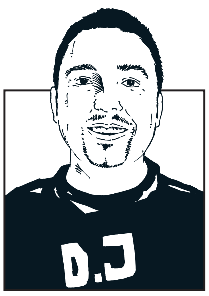
**SPY HUNTER**
MEET THE ARCADE GAME WITH THE COOLEST SOUNDTRACK OF ALL TIME

**E.T.**
WHY A BURIAL WAS SIMPLY TOO GOOD FOR ATARI'S FLOP

eMag

# THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE MONSTER FROM DOOM



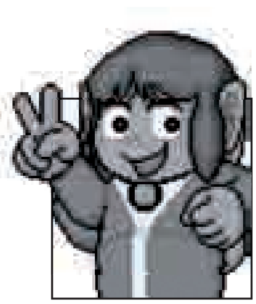

## DARRAN JONES

John Romero's head skewered on a stick is always good for a laugh, but my favourite is probably the pink demon. Gotta love that toothy grin.
**Expertise:** Playing *Space Giraffe* without my retinas exploding
**Currently playing:**
*Eternal Sonata*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Robotron: 2084*



## MIKE TOOLEY

The zombies are fun, but the Cacodemon is my favourite, always appearing at the worst moment, ensuring you lose concentration and lots of ammo. Surely no other monster has indirectly killed as many marines.
**Expertise:** Games that few have heard of and less have played
**Currently playing:**
*The Orange Box*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Mr Do!*



## STUART HUNT

It has to be the Cyberdemon because it was the first truly trouser-destroying videogame enemy I ever encountered. This ugly hammer-headed, turret-mounted tree trunk was also a tough little blighter to fell.
**Expertise:**
Games with flying bits in them
**Currently playing:**
*Sega Rally*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Lucky & Wild*



## ANDREW FISHER

It has to be the Imp, who always serves up a nice warm welcome.
**Expertise:** 20 glorious years with the Commodore 64
**Currently playing:**
*Frenzy*. I'm addicted – again.
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Wizball*



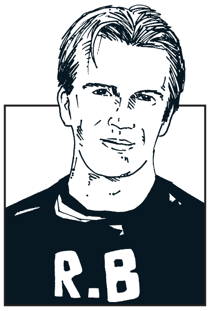

## PAUL DRURY

It has to be the pink demon. The hunched back, demented roar and vacant eyes… I felt an affinity with old pinky after long sessions on the original.
**Expertise:** Getting programmers to confess their drug habits
**Currently playing:**
*Rhyme Rider Kerorican*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Sheep In Space*




## CRAIG GRANNELL

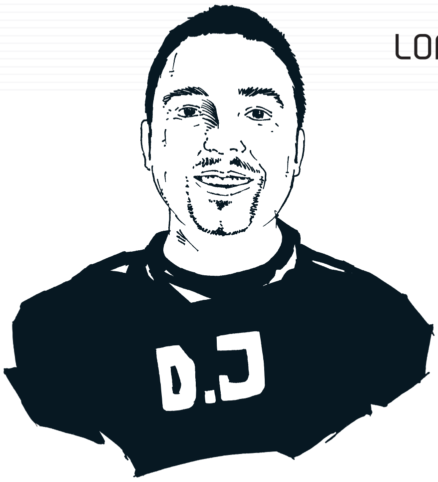
The Lost Souls, perfect for a hungry adventurer – if you can distract them with a suitably interesting piece of botany, you can toast marshmallows on the back of their heads.
**Expertise:** Hating dark evenings when the clocks go back
**Currently playing:**
*Sensible Soccer*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*H.E.R.O.*




## RICHARD BURTON

Mancubus – a lardy gun-toting blob of a monster with a mean fireball attack, but a slow old lump so not a major threat. Also tends to telegraph his attacks with a war cry.
**Expertise:**
Spectrum and Amstrad gaming
**Currently playing:**
*Dynamite Dan*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Manic Miner*

# LOADING...




**We all remember the first time we played *Doom*. It's like the assassination of JFK. Everyone knows what they were doing, exactly where they were and what the experience was like.**

For me, I was peering over the shoulder of a friend while he was crouched over his 486 loading up id's masterpiece. First and foremost, I've always been a console fan at heart – I quickly dropped the Speccy and CPC 464 as soon as the Master System was released and never really looked back – but when I saw that lone space marine smoothly moving through those beautifully atmospheric corridors I knew I was witnessing something special. When he suddenly turned a corner and my friend ran into several imps, I knew I was experiencing something akin to Einstein's 'Eureka!' moment. Suddenly, just like that, gaming, for me, changed virtually overnight and I never looked at my Mega Drive in quite the same way.

It was several years later that I finally got to play my own copy of *Doom* – on Sega's Saturn – and those memories immediately came flooding back. Regardless of how you feel about FPSs, *Doom*'s impact on the industry cannot be denied. While some may feel that a game from 1993 is too new to appear in these hallowed pages, we really couldn't think of a more important game to grace our front cover.

Enjoy the magazine








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## BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

## INSIDE

At-a-glance retro sections…














## ESSENTIALS



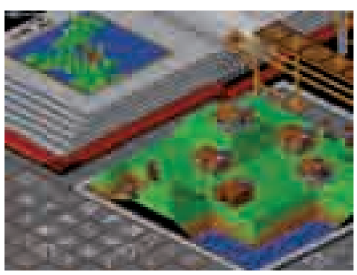
## RUN-'N'-GUN SPECIAL





## THE MAKING OF…





# RETRORATED



## THE GAMES LISTING…

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it







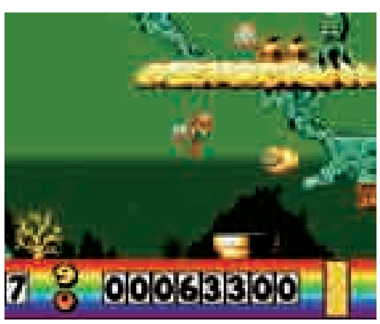





## RETROINSPECTION

**MASTER SYSTEM**

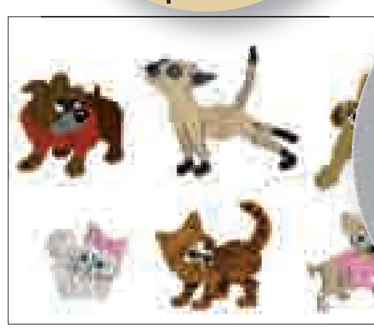




## THE MAKING OF…

**JAMES POND**





## DESERT ISLAND DISKS

**ROB FULOP**

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD

# RETRORADAR

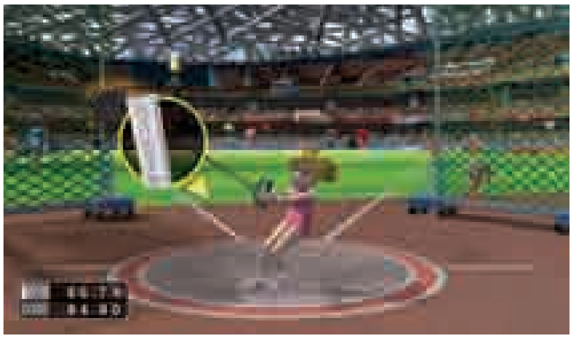
## THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…



# WE GO SE-GA-GA

### RETRO GAMER HIJACKS THE GAMES ROOM SO WE CAN PLAY NiGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE AT IMAGINE TOWERS

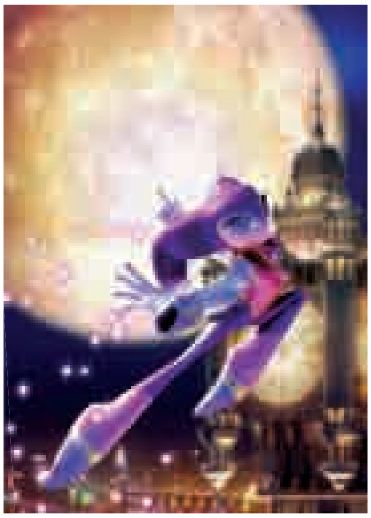


Yes we could make a joke at Peach's expense, but we're absolutely spent.



How did Mario beat Sonic? We smell a fix.

**There's plenty of exciting news coming out of Sega HQ this month. So we've decided to dedicate a whole page of coverage to it.** First, we'll start by mentioning Sega's recent visit to Retro Towers to showcase *NiGHTS: Journey Of Dreams* and *Mario & Sonic At The Olympic Games* to the guys over at **n•Revolution**. Of course, we weren't going to let an opportunity as good as this slip through our fingers, so while Stuart kept the **n•Revolution** team busy by trying to convince them that *Sega Bass Fishing 1* is actually a better game than its sequel, Darran crept into the viewing room to get a glimpse of the games in action.



We feared for *NiGHTS: Journey Of Dreams*, but now we've played it we can't wait for the finished game.

Okay, here's the deal, guys: *NiGHTS* looks great. Truly, Sonic Team seems to have recaptured the look and style of the Saturn original perfectly, and if the early code we saw was anything to go by then they're (thankfully) only making superficial tweaks to the gameplay. *NiGHTS* enthusiasts might be saddened by the news that the story will centre around two new protagonists, Helen and Will, but their look seems to be cut from the same cloth as Elliot and Claris. A new Nightopia, however, certainly offers a dazzlingly vivid environment in which to spin, twirl and rocket, and the new musical score is enchanting. Believe us when we say this is shaping up to be something very special indeed, and with the impressive installation rate of Wii's at the moment, let's hope that *NiGHTS* finally gets the audience it deserves and becomes a lucrative title for a good many years to come.

So, as Darran noticed the **n•Revolution** team starting to lose interest in Stuart (it does happen occasionally), he booted up *Mario & Sonic* to get a quick peek at some of the events it has to offer. And after taking in the initial shock of seeing Mario and Sonic parading about on the same screen together, he raced through a few of the events. Table tennis, swimming and fencing form just the tip of the iceberg, and each event, as far as we could gather, makes a different use of the Wii Remote to help heighten the feel of real play. Take the archery event, for instance, you hold the Wii Remote in exactly the same manner as you would a bow, and draw the Nunchuk controller back – keeping it straight like an arrow – before releasing it with a snap of the trigger.

The whole package looks great, typically bright and Nintendo (although we almost spewed our internal organs over those pretty graphics when we spotted Shadow in the character roster), but even the greatest games throw the odd coffee Revel at you.

On top of this, we received news that first made us angry and then immediately jubilant. Apparently, the release of the new *Super Smash Bros Brawl* has been put back. Boo, hiss. But alas, it's all good. In fact, it's better than good, it's Sonic. Yes, ironically, the fast one is slowing things down in development as he's reported to be making an appearance in the game. This means we can finally have a real Sonic and Mario spat, wrap those white gloves around Sonic's throat and stick a few spikes into the moustachioed butterball to see if the rumour that he bleeds gold Ragu is correct.



Imagine your best fantasy and times it by a hundred. Then times it again, that's what playing *NiGHTS* is like.

## HERO OF THE MONTH



**CODY**

**Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero or heroine. This month it's the turn of *Cody***

**First appearance:** *Final Fight*

**Distinguishing features:** White T-shirt

**Weapon of choice:** Knife

**Most likely to:** Get put in prison

**Least likely to:** Appear in *Prison Break*

**Interesting fact:** Cody's *Street Fighter Alpha 3* quote is, "With so much riding on my fists, this will not be my Final Fight."

## LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

**NO 27:** FOX FIGHTS BACK (COMMODORE 64)

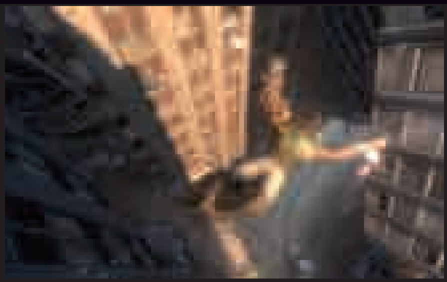
Sometimes loading screens mystify us with abstract imagery and eye-popping action. Occasionally though, a loading screen featuring a cute animal holding a massive gun will beat them all. The marvellous *Fox Fights Back* by Denton Designs is one such game.




**JUST IN** IT ARRIVED TOO LATE FOR OUR MAIN NEWS STORY BUT WE'VE JUST DISCOVERED THAT SUMO DIGITAL IS WORKING ON A NEW TENNIS GAME STARRING A SELECTION OF CLASSIC SEGA CHARACTERS. YAY!

# THREE, IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

CAPCOM ANNOUNCES THE CONTINUATION OF THREE CLASSIC FRANCHISES



**While we'll be going into this story in greater detail next month, this late snippet of news was so amazing that we had to include it in the current issue. Capcom has announced the return of three fantastic licences, and we're so excited that we ran several victory laps around Bournemouth town square to celebrate.**

First up is a brand new *Bionic Commando* game for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. While its not being handled by Capcom's internal team, it does appear to be using the *Lost Planet* game engine, and seeing how well the grapple hook worked in that title, we have every confidence that this is going to be equally as good.

Then there's the news that a third *Commando* title is on the way and that it will apparently be heading to Xbox Live Arcade and the PSN network. Little is known about the third part of the trilogy other than that it's another top-down shooter (like prequels *Commando* and *Mercs*) and that it will be utilising polygons instead of sprites.

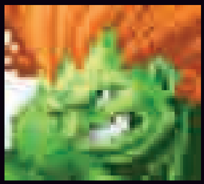
Still, as great as all of this news is, we've saved the best till last, and no, it's not a new *Strider* game. Capcom has announced that *Street Fighter IV* is definitely being made. There's no news on whether it will be 2D or 3D or what systems it will be appearing on, but hopefully we'll have all these incredibly important details next month.

## FIGHT NIGHT

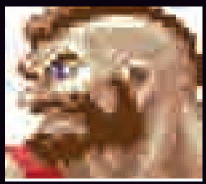
NOW THAT WE KNOW STREET FIGHTER IV IS A DEFINITE WE'VE MADE A LIST OF THE OLD FRIENDS THAT WE'D LOVE TO SEE AS PLAYABLE CHARACTERS



**HUGO**
Relatively new to the *Street Fighter* scene (he made his debut in *Double Impact*) Hugo is nevertheless an essential addition to the canon and needs to be in the fourth outing.



**BLANKA**
The green-skinned furball never appeared in *Street Fighter III*, so we can only imagine what moves he's been learning ever since *Street Fighter II*. Let's hope Capcom includes him.



**ZANGIEF**
One wrestles bears in his native Russia, the other hangs around with a pre-op transsexual. Still, forget about their private lives for a minute, a rumble between Zangief and Hugo would be pretty amazing.



**FEI LONG**
Bruce Lee never died, he just appeared as a new character in *Super Street Fighter II*. We hope to God that Fei Long and his amazing eyebrows make the grade – he's as hard as nails and as cool as a cucumber.

# THIS JOUST IN: RG'S JOUST WATCH

RETRO GAMER KEEPS YOU UP-TO-DATE WITH ALL THE LATEST ON THE UPCOMING JOUST MOVIE (LIKE YOU CARE…)

**We were enormously pleased to discover that a *Joust* movie is in the pipeline, so much so that we have decided to keep on top of the story and feed you with whatever tasty titbits and rumours that we find about the film circulating the internet.** Well, so far we've discovered that Michael Cerenzie – who helmed *Blackout* and *Black Water Transit*, (nope, we haven't heard of them either) – will be directing the film and he's been talking to the press about the picture. "*Joust* is an arcade game that's as old as *Pac-Man* and has global awareness," explains Cerenzie. "We took one element of the game and the brand itself and built a whole new world around it for the film." He took 'one element' of the game. Well given that the movie's called *Joust*, and given that you could officially constitute that as taking 'one element' from the game, surely this means the movie could be about absolutely anything? He then went on to say that the movie's going to be something like "*Gladiator* meets *Mad Max*". God help us.



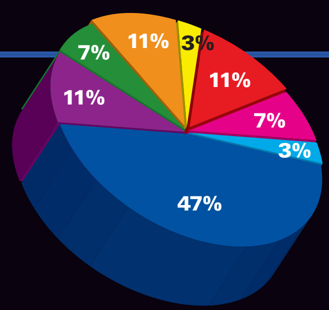




## HOT TOPICS

WHICH SEGA STAR WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN SMASH BROS

Tails **3%**
Billy Hatcher **11%**
Ryo Hazuki **7%**
Nights **3%**
Alex Kidd **47%**
Axel **11%**
Flag Man **7%**
Tyris Flare **11%**




APOLOGY



AND IT WAS GOOD

## BOMB JACK

**Apologies for failing to highlight the amazing Speccy conversion of Bomb Jack last issue.** This caused hysteria on the **Retro Gamer** forum, so we've decided to take the time to remedy the situation. *Bomb Jack* on the Spectrum is the finest 8-bit conversion of the game ever released. Not only is it home to the most faithful-looking *Bomb Jack*, it also somehow manages to retain the arcade's tight gameplay in ways that Commodore and Amstrad could only ever dream of. On top of this, it's black and yellow, which happen to be two of **Retro Gamer**'s favourite colours. And it's on the Spectrum, which is arguably one of the best 8-bit computers ever released.

# SUPER FIGHTER TEAM: THE WORLD WARRIORS

## BEGGAR PRINCE BUGS BUGGER OFF

**It seems the popularity of Super Fighter Team's 1998 Mega Drive game *Beggar Prince* has been quietly working its magic behind the scenes.** The game has grossed over nine hundred copies around the world, and the waiting list for its stop-start production runs are akin to a new Maserati or a Nintendo Wii (in a homebrew sense, anyway). We've not been lucky enough to sample the game's delights yet, but if the feedback from a few reviews floating around the internet is anything to go by it sounds like a great RPG indeed. The third run of the game has now been pressed, and it marks a somewhat special batch for Californian Brandon Cobb and his team.

Using the money raised by the game so far, Super Fighter Team has finally been able to invest the time to iron out a few of the niggling issues that customers had with the game. On top of this, it has also made the game fully compatible with all Mega Drive systems, packaged it inside a spiffy clam shell – complete with one of those rail-hanger dongles – and decorated it with newly drawn box art. And this has all been done out of the kindness of the team's heart, because not a single penny has been added to the asking price. So, if you would like to order yourself a copy of the game, simply head over to www.beggarprince.com.

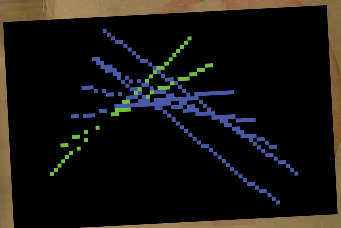


The homebrew project that just keeps on giving. All-new box art, with all the bugs ironed out.



The new *Beggar Prince* box art in all its glory. Note the unhappy chap on the right.

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



## QIX

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

Without bad villains there would be no good heroes. What would Batman be without the Joker? What would Mario be without Bowser? Exactly

**First appearance:** Qix

**Distinguishing features:** Er, it's just a few vector lines

**Weapon of choice:** His touch is deadly

**Most Likely to:** Appear in a number of very similar sequels

**Least likely to:** Feature in a film about his life story

**Unusual fact:** Twin Qix managed to reach the prototype stage but it was never actually released as a game

# SOUNDS SENSI-BALL

## LIVE ARCADE HIT GOES AWOL

**Er, what's going on with the world lately?** Last month it was announced that *Rez* and *Ikaruga* will be making an appearance on Xbox Live, and this month we hear that Sonic will feature in the new *Super Smash Bros Brawl*. But for some bizarre reason we still haven't received any news about Codemasters' *Sensible World Of Soccer* despite the fact that it was initially due to appear back in August. This is rather troubling as we've been playing early code for some time now and it's cracking stuff.

Due to essentially laying new hi-res visuals over the original Amiga engine, Codemasters has ensured that the game plays exactly as you remembered it to. The original Amiga version has even been included for good measure, which makes us even more upset.

There's been no news from Codemasters as of yet, but with everyone now going mad for *FIFA 08* and the latest *Pro Evolution*, we can't help but wonder if Codies has missed the boat and will now release the game in the new year. Let's just hope a decision is reached soon.



It looks like an impossible shot, but it's amazing what you can actually pull off in *Sensi*.



Not content with delivering the Amiga version in all its pixelated glory, Codies has also included a new hi-res mode.

# THE GALLERY

THIS ISSUE WE TAKE A LOOK AT STUART'S FAVOURITE GENRE, THE VIDEOGAME TIE-IN. SO HERE'S A FEW OF HIS FAVOURITES FOR YOU TO MULL OVER...



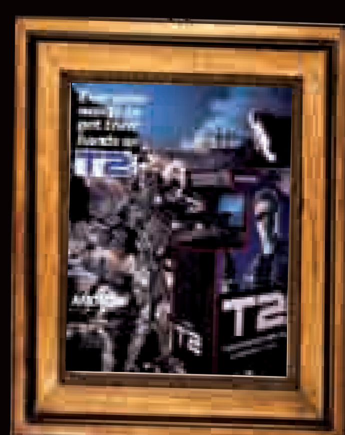

**Cops**
**Released:** 1994
**Featured Artwork:** US Flyer
**Does it sell the game?** It looks more like a weird *Police Academy* arcade shooter than a real-life representation of what real US policing is like. That dude playing the arcade game in the aviators is obviously a rookie cop, check out his fancy-dress uniform and the fact he's trying to shoot at the word 'cops'. It strikes us as odd that Atari selected those particular screenshots to show off the game: the green screen showing the back of a cop car in *Most Haunted* vision and the police officer shooting at a couple of barrels. Oh, and what's with that stupid, unnecessary Driving, Driving and Shooting & Shooting boxout which is missing a picture.
**What's cool about it?**: Not a note.
**What's naff about it?:** Screenshots, the ugly looking cab, the cheesy cop, the list goes on…
**Trivia**: The cameramen on the show are forced to wear bullet-proof vests.



**Judge Dredd**
**Released:** 1992
**Featured Artwork:** US Flyer
**Does it sell the game?** Style wise this is a bit of a mess. You have a picture of Judge Dredd, which appears to have been hand drawn and then doctored in Photoshop to make it look all ethereal and ghostly. Fine, that works. But then you also have a photograph of Ernie Wise holding a loaded gun to Edward Woodward's head. And what's with the four action-packed, villain-loaded screenshots that don't exist. It's a gun game set in a violent, dystopian crime-ravaged world, not one of those jerky virtual interior house tours that feature on estate agent's websites.
**What's cool about it?**: Not a lot.
**What's naff about it:** It's a bit of a letdown. Think of all that glorious *2000AD* artwork that exists in the world, and then look at this.
**Trivia:** Early in the film's development, Arnie was considered for the role of Judge Dredd.



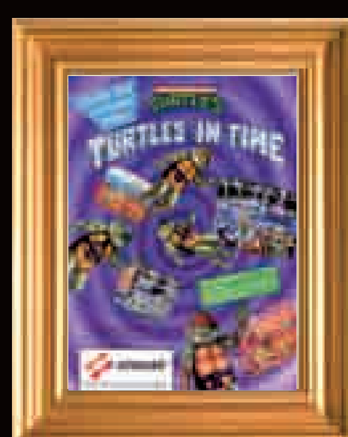

**Rambo III**
**Released:** 1989
**Featured Artwork:** US Flyer
**Does it sell the game?** This lazy flyer looks like a one-sheet movie poster. Rambo riding a horse through the most sporadic environment on the entire planet. One second it's arid, desert heat and then a few yards up the road it's like the set of *Santa Claus: The Movie*. Also, would it have pained them to grab a half-decent shot of Rambo, one that actually has him use his gun and doesn't look like it was taken using a powerful zoom by someone standing in a different hemisphere.
**What's cool about it?**: He's holding a gun. Rather than look it up, we'll hazard a guess and say it's a stretched Walther PPK sporting a guitar strap.
**What's naff about it:** Not much is going on. It would've been good to see what it is that Rambo is trying to track… probably the correct movie set.
**Trivia:** Rambo's horse also appeared in *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* – he played the part of Indiana Jones's horse (we're not joking).




**T2**
**Released:** 1991
**Featured Artwork:** US Flyer
**Does it sell the game?** An exoskeleton playing the arcade game? The genius at Midway who came up with that idea must have been dropping it into conversation. 'Oh, did you hear that the price of whelks has gone up by four cents recently, oh, and that I came up with the idea to have an exoskeleton playing *T2* for the arcade flyer design, despite the fact that the game asks you to blow them up?
**What's cool about it?:** Where the cab art cuts away the full image of Arnie's gun, it looks like he's holding a hairdryer, especially with that lead he's holding in his other hand.
**What's naff about it:** It's flawed: exoskeletons fighting exoskeletons, plus floating arcade cabs played by floating exoskeletons inside a futuristic junkyard that's probably void of an electricity outlet.
**Trivia:** John Conner uses an Atari Portfolio handheld computer in the ATM scene.



**The Fast And The Furious**
**Released:** 2004
**Featured Artwork:** US Flyer
**Does it sell the game?** This neon eye-pain is a cluster-fudge of blur, with so many garish, horizontal-slapped glowing words it holds about as much style and appeal as an omnibus of *Pimp My Ride UK* on Christmas morning. We can't believe they're selling the fact that this game has motion – it's a bloody racing game! Now, if it was selling the fact that every cab comes with a free life-sized exoskeleton of Paul Walker that you could easily fashion to make it look like he's actually playing it, we'd have something quite special to say about it.
**What's cool about it:** If you turn the flyer upside down it reads exactly the same.
**What's naff about it:** It's a game about illegally driving, physically abused cars, so… everything.
**Trivia:** Paul Walker owns a Nissan Skyline R34, a car he used in the film *2 Fast 2 Furious* (thanks to IMDB for that probably made-up fact)




**Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Turtles In Time**
**Released:** 1991
**Featured Artwork:** US Flyer
**Does it sell the game?** We can't work out if we're looking at some amazingly naff cuddly toys (who are all pulling the same constipated expression) or if we're instead viewing four sad actors in turtle outfits (who are pulling the same constipated expression. Still, it has reminded us of the following joke: A man goes to a fancy dress party with a bandana over his eyes and a woman strapped to his back. "Who are you? Asks another party goer. "A ninja turtle," he calmly replies. "So what's that on your back," says the party goer, pointing to the woman. "That's Michelle."
**What's cool about it:** The actual game does look rather nice.
**What's naff about it:** The scary men/toys.
**Trivia:** Er, well… Oh. Did you know that the four turtles are named after famous artists from the Renaissance? You did? Damn!

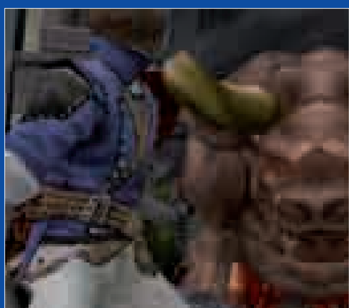
# retro GAMER DIARY

## THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER

IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past, that doesn't mean there aren't any games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



NOVEMBER 07

### CASTLEVANIA: THE DRACULA X CHRONICLES

**Released:** 23 November

**Publisher:** Konami

**Price:** £34.99

**Format:** PSP

This is quite possibly the best *Castlevania* release of all time. Although it's not the main game we're excited about. No siree. It's the fact that Konami is bundling this update with the original versions of *Symphony Of The Night* and *Rondo Of Blood*. Both games are considered to be the best titles in the franchise, so it's amazing to have them on a single UMD.



NOVEMBER 07

### MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

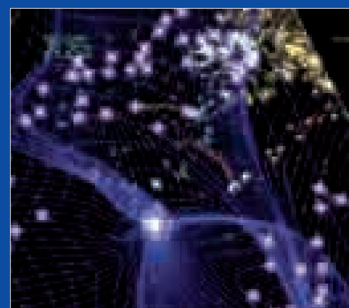
**Released:** 23 November

**Publisher:** Sega

**Price:** £34.99

**Format:** Wii, DS

When we asked Stefan McGarry why Sonic didn't win every race against Mario, Sega's PR star just winked slyly at us and said it was all about the stamina. We're not quite sure what he was suggesting, but we do know that short of hitting Shadow in the face with a spiked running shoe, this is the most fun we've ever had with Sega's mascot.



NOVEMBER 07

### GEOMETRY WARS: GALAXIES

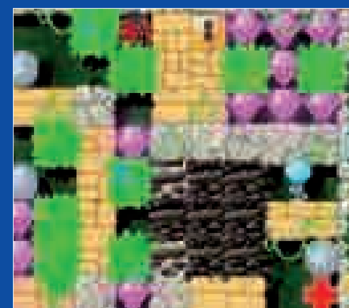
**Released:** 30 November

**Publisher:** Sierra Entertainment

**Price:** £34.99

**Format:** Wii, DS

It's not often that we admit to being wrong, but it's become blatantly obvious to us that the Xbox Live version of *Geometry Wars* was actually far better than *Bankshot Billiards 2*. Anyway, now that's off our chests, we can start getting hyped for the impromptu sequel, which features more levels, more visuals and well… more everything really.



NOVEMBER 07

### BOULDER DASH: ROCKS!

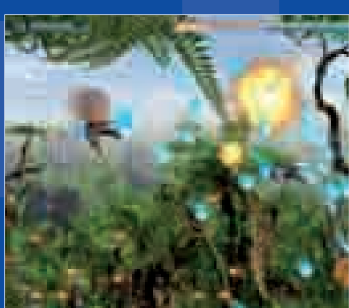
**Released:** 30 November

**Publisher:** 10tacle Studios

**Price:** £34.99

**Format:** DS, PSP

We like *Boulder Dash: ROCKS!* and it's not just because it came with a free frisbee that we're currently throwing around the office. While Rockford's new look is bound to upset some of his more stalwart 8-bit fans, there's no denying that the excellent gameplay from the original game is still present and correct. It arrived a little too late for the current issue, so expect the review next month.



NOVEMBER 07

### SÖLDNER-X HIMMELSSTÜRMER

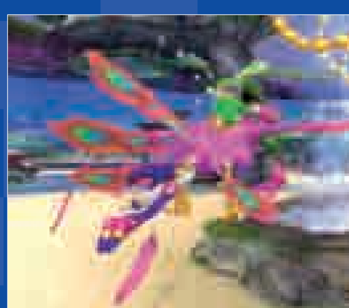
**Released**: November

**Publisher:** eastasiasoft

**Price:** £24.99

**Format:** PC

With so many shoot-'em-ups appearing on Xbox Live Arcade, it's refreshing to see one heading to the humble PC. While we've not had a chance to play *Söldner-X* yet, we've every confidence that SideQuest Studios will sidestep the issues that plagued fellow German release *Last Hope*. It's certainly looking impressive, but we won't be truly happy until we've actually played it.



JANUARY 08

### NiGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS

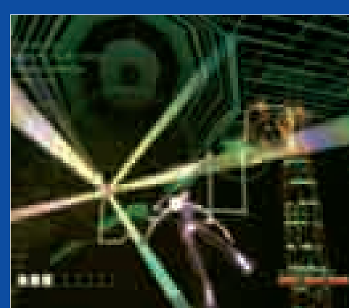
**Released:** 23 January

**Publisher:** Sega

**Price:** £34.99

**Format:** Wii

Put your hands up if you thought Sega would mess up *NiGHTS*? Quite a few of you, eh? Well worry not, after an in-depth play the other week, we can safely confirm that *NiGHTS*' latest outing not only captures the brilliance of the first game, but may be (loud whisper) even better. Sega has a lot resting on *Journey Of Dreams*, but from what we've seen there's absolutely nothing to worry about.



JANUARY 08

### REZ

**Released:** January

**Publisher:** Q Entertainment

**Price:** £34.99

**Format:** Xbox Live Arcade

It's a little-known fact that Sega's *Rez* is one of the greatest games ever made. Originally released on Sega's Dreamcast, it's a beautiful fusion of mesmerising sound and abstract visuals and is quite unlike any other on-rails shooter (think *Panzer Dragoon* on acid and you'll be getting close). Anyway, it's now been announced for Live Arcade so a new generation of gamers will be able to discover this fantastic title.




MARCH 08

### SEGA BASS FISHING

**Released:** 23 March (US)

**Publisher:** Sega

**Price:** £35

**Format:** Wii

While there's little doubt that a fishing game will work perfectly on the Wii, we can't help but wonder why Sega is bothering with a bass game. After all, everyone knows that the bass is the most boring of fishes, isn't as smart as a perch and lacks the killer instinct of a pike. Worst of all they became really arrogant after the original arcade game was such a hit and are apparently already making ridiculous demands. Stupid fish.

# THE RETRO FORUM

**HAVE YOUR SAY…** SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET




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## STAR LETTER!

### WHAT GOES AROUND…

Dear Retro Gamer,
I've been the proud owner of an Xbox 360 and Wii for nearly a year now and I'm finding myself horribly addicted to both of them. Amazingly though, it's not because I can play the likes of *Halo 3*, *Metroid Prime 3* or *Project Gotham 4*. No, it's because I can't get enough of Xbox Live Arcade and the Virtual Console.

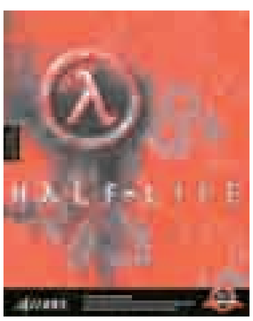
When I was a teenager I'd spend ages playing *Super Probotector* with my mates, or hanging out at the arcades playing games like *Double Dragon*, and amazingly, many years on I'm doing exactly the same thing. Sure the hair's a little thinner, and the paunch a little wider, but I'd never have thought I'd be enjoying classic games on my new consoles.

Graham Turner, Staffordshire

*You're right Graham, it's amazing what an impact both systems have had on the industry, but let's not forget the PS3 and its PlayStation Network. It may not be as well established as its peers, but there are still plenty of classics like* Mortal Kombat II, Rampart *and* Q*Bert *to enjoy.*



» After a tough day at the office, the **Retro Gamer** boys liked to let off a little steam...




» *Half-Life*– just one of the classic PC games that Ross is finding hard to run.

### PC OR NOT PC?

Dear Retro Gamer,
I guess you know you're a true "Retro-head" when you turn down a friend's offer to use his PS3 while he goes away on holiday. Simple fact of the matter was that there is NOTHING on the machine I feel like playing or feel that I'm missing out on!

Still, the real reason for the letter is to hopefully persuade you to run a feature about getting classic PC titles to RUN on newer PC operating systems like VISTA and XP!

I'm having a nightmare of a time trying to get the likes of *System Shock 2*, *AVP: GOLD*, *Magic And Mayhem*, *Half-Life* and *Dungeon Keeper 2* to install and run on XP.

Then there's the real old stuff like *Realms Of The Haunting*. I know I need DOSBOX, but I don't have any idea how to get the damn thing working. Surely there are others with the same problem as me out there? If you could make this happen for me and your other readers I'd be eternally grateful.

Ross Sillifant, Devon

*We totally sympathise with your plight, Ross – just the other day Darran tried to load up* X-Wing vs. TIE-Fighter*, only to be greeted by a blank screen. We'll certainly look into this and try to put something together for a future issue.*



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy **Retro Gamer** T-shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a snazzy new **Retro Gamer** binder. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

### DONKEY DOH!

Dear Retro Gamer,
I just wanted to say that I really enjoyed reading about the history of *Donkey Kong*. However, I did notice that your family tree has missed one key release in the history of *DK*. The board game released by Milton Bradley. Also, in your A-Z, wouldn't it have been more fitting to state "D is for Diddy Kong: the gaming world's equivalent of Scrappy Doo, enough said…"?

Regards Dave, Portsmouth




*Well thanks for that, Dave. We thought we'd blocked the terrible memory of the* Donkey Kong *board game from our minds, but now you've brought it back and it's more vivid than ever. Still, the* Pac-Man *release was pretty good.*

### DAZ'LL FIX IT?

Dear Retro Gamer,
I was wondering if you could do a *Jim'll Fix It* type thing for me - a sort of 'Retro Gamer Fix It'. Back in (I think) 1985, I went to a Commodore show at the Novotel in London and while I was walking around the exhibitors I saw one in particular – the God of gaming in my eyes – Jeff Minter. I just had to get his autograph, so I edged my way around the side of his impressive stand and picked up a *Batalyx* flyer. At this point Jeff was talking to someone and I was getting a bit nervous, then my chance came… and I bottled it – aaagggghhhhh! I walked away with the flyer cursing my stage fright. I still have the flyer and was wondering if you could fix it for me to get it signed all these years later?

All the best, Gregor, via email

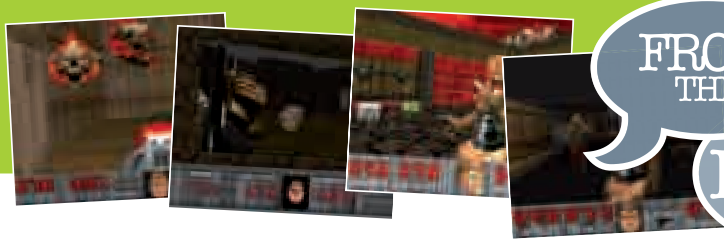


» Here's a picture of *Batalyx*, Gregor. Hopefully it will make up for the unsigned flyer you have.

*Well, seeing as we've given* Space Giraffe *it's highest ever score in a print magazine, it's quite possible that we may be able to fix it for you. Send in your flyer and we'll get Jeff to sign it and stick it on eBay. Sorry, send it back to you.*

### RETRO PRIMED

Dear Retro Gamer,
I recently purchased your sister magazine **games™** and was immediately impressed with its brand new redesign. Everything was much easier to read and there were plenty of interesting articles. Suitably impressed I hurried to the Retro Section, only to discover a *Metroid Prime* making-of, of all things. Now don't get me wrong, the article itself was extremely well written and told me a lot about the game that I didn't know, but if this is a retro release then I'm a bottle-nosed dolphin with poor eyesight.



# FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT YOUR FAVOURITE MOMENT IN DOOM WAS

**ID: psj3809**

Favourite moment of *DOOM*? First time I found the chainsaw, went crazy with it! Great weapon and a good laugh! (Plus it never ran out of petrol).

**ID: yethboth**

Experiencing the excellent PlayStation and Sega Saturn soundtrack, which was far better than the PC soundtrack.

**ID: Antiriad2097**

Playing the PS1 version alone in the dark (that's me in the dark, not the game, you know what I mean) and hearing that baby crying in the distance. That gave me the chills.

**ID: mikeb**

Seeing it for the first time being demoed at a local computer shop. I was familiar with *Wolfenstein* but my jaw still nearly hit the floor.

**ID: jimbo_too**

Breathing a sigh of relief, using the teleporter at the end of Episode 1 and finding myself in a pitch-black room full of demons, and dying in 0.0001 seconds. Sheer terror (to a 10-year old).

**ID: will2097**

13 years of arguing that it's crap? That was one hell of a moment.

**ID: SirClive**

The bit where The Rock says, "I want your clothes, your boots and your motorcycle". No, wait…

**ID: GarryG**

When it told me TCP/IP was CONNECTED

**ID: consoles.tv**

Standing outside my friend's house ringing the doorbell but nobody opened, while I heard the shotgun blasts and monsters roaring from upstairs (I had never seen or heard *Doom* before). They turned up the sound so loud that they did not hear me. I had to throw pebbles and twigs against their window to get them to notice me.

**ID: TheDude18**

My first ever deathmatch session. Lasted eight hours.

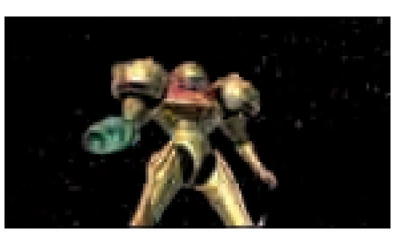
**ID: AfterburN003**

For me it was probably getting it for Xbox Live Arcade and pleasantly finding they'd done a top-notch job porting it… brought a lot of great memories back. I first had *DOOM* for the Atari Jaguar. Quality!!

Please, please, please don't go down the same route and start covering Xbox, GameCube, DS and any other new games, as they aren't retro in any sense of the word. Don't make me cancel my subscription now.

Yours warningly,
Kevin Whitely

*We were a bit surprised to see that making-of as well, but it was certainly a fascinating read. In* ***games™****'s defence, it has a slightly different remit to ourselves, and although you will find that we'll occasionally cover the odd Xbox Live Arcade or DS title, you can rest assured that it'll be a cold day in hell (or a good ten years at least) before you see any PlayStation retrospectives in your beloved* **Retro Gamer**.



» With *Metroid Prime* just five years old, you won't see it in **Retro Gamer**. Not yet, anyway.

CONTACT US **Snail Mail:** Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset BH2 6EZ **Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



# Collector's Corner



RETRO GAMER'S READERSHIP IS FULL OF PASSIONATE COLLECTORS, SO IT'S HIGH TIME WE STARTED COVERING THEM. THIS MONTH WE DECIDED TO INTERVIEW JAMES COSTELLO WHO HAS A MASTER SYSTEM COLLECTION THAT WOULD MAKE EVEN SEGA WEEP.

**Retro Gamer: When did you first start collecting, James?**
**James Costello:** I've always been into playing videogames, but collecting them never even entered my head until a couple of years ago. I was actually going to start buying some Atari Lynx games in 2005 and had spent some time lurking around the Atari Age forums. Around the same time my dad was having a clear-out in the attic and was about to throw out my old Master System. I hooked it up and played *Moonwalker, Castle Of Illusion* and *Alex Kidd* for the first time in maybe ten years! Then I went on eBay and started to track down some other games I used to have or used to want, but could never afford. I found some great forums on sega8bit.com and smspower.org where I read about games and accessories I never even knew existed. I also found out that GameStation had retro games for sale and, before I knew what had happened, I was collecting.



» We'd never heard of the Samsung Gam-Boy either. Learn with **Retro Gamer**.

**RG: So why focus on the Master System?**
**JC:** I think part of it has to do with it being the first games system I owned. The first systems I played were the VIC-20 and Spectrum, but these were my mum and dad's, I didn't really get games for them myself. The Master System was all mine and I used to get maybe one or two games for each birthday and Christmas. I can remember the excitement of tearing open the wrapping paper to reveal some of that white grid pattern.

**RG: How long did it take to complete your collection?**
**JC:** I don't think I will ever complete my collection. Master System items are always being discovered – strange cover variations, rare third-party controllers and prototypes. Although, apart from *Smurfs 2*, I completed the European-released games set in under a year.

**RG: What's the most expensive Master System title that you own?**
**JC:** That's difficult, as prices are always up and down. I have a few that are considered valuable: *Super Boy II*, which is a *Mario* clone released in Korea. The *Lucky Dime Caper* Gift Set, which came with a T-shirt and audio cassette, I'd say is worth a good amount, I haven't seen one on eBay in over a year. I also have what seems to be a prototype cover for *Air Rescue*, but as there's only one it's difficult to value.

**RG: What was the hardest title to track down and why?**
**JC:** Most games I don't actually try to track down, I just get them if I see them. The classic version of *RoboCop Versus The Terminator* was hard work to track down – it wasn't mentioned in the original classics line-up in magazines at the time – and, so far, all copies have been found in Belgium. I ended up getting this from another collector.

I guess the traditional rarest game for the Master System is *Les Schtroumpfs Autour Du Monde* (*Smurfs 2*). It pops up every now and then but I don't fancy shelling out £200 plus for it, yet!

**RG: If someone else is inspired to start collecting Master System titles, which ten games should they get first?**
**JC:** *Alex Kidd In Miracle World, Alex Kidd In Shinobi World, Zillion, Wonder Boy III: The Dragons Trap, Wonder Boy, Putt And Putter, Sonic, R-Type, Castle Of Illusion* and *Power Strike II*.



» Quite possibly the most comprehensive perhipherals section we've ever seen.





» Yes it's damned impressive, but do you really need eight versions of *Black Belt*, James?

**RG: Do you tend to play the games you collect, or are you more of a hoarder?**

**JC:** Both. I have certain games I like to play but I have a lot of games in my collection I've tried and don't like, plus I don't like any sports games or RPGs, really. I often get recommendations on sega8bit.com of good games I may have missed, plus we have a game club on there where a different person chooses a game each month that everyone will play and discuss on the forum.

**RG: Are you quite happy to spend large amounts of money on rubbish games, just for completion sake?**

**JC:** Inevitably this is going to happen if you're a collector, but part of the fun of collecting is trying to find that rare game you want at a bargain price. Just throwing your money at eBay isn't much fun.

**RG: What's your favourite Master System game and why?**

**JC:** It's got to be *Alex Kidd In Miracle World.* It was the built-in game on my first Master System and I've played it for many, many hours. Everything about it is fantastic. It was way ahead of its time, *Miracle World* wasn't just a simple platformer, you could swim, fly a peddle-copter and ride a motorbike! So much better than *Mario Bros.* on the NES. It's just a shame you can't say the same thing about the other *Alex Kidd* games.

**RG: Where do you tend to buy most of your games?**

**JC:** Probably going to have to say eBay, but about a quarter of my Master System games are from GameStation. I always pick up any Sega stuff I see at car-boot sales, as well – if they're cheap – even if I already have it I can use it for trading. I like trading with other collectors,



» Quite possibly one of the rarest Mario games of all time. Just don't tell Nintendo about it.

> “PART OF THE FUN IS TRYING TO FIND A RARE GAME AT A BARGAIN PRICE”

there are some friendly and helpful people on sega8bit.com and smspower.org to trade games with.

**RG: How much would you say your collection is worth?**

**JC:** Too difficult to answer. I could give each item a rough value and add them all up, but what's the point? I don't look at my collection with dollar signs in my eyes. I collect for the enjoyment, not the investment.

**RG: Do you collect different versions of games or are you just happy with PAL releases?**

**JC:** I could mention at this point that I have eight variations of *Black Belt*. Yes, I try to get every variation of each game. It's like a disease.

**RG: What does your family/significant other think of your collecting?**

**JC:** My girlfriend would perhaps prefer I didn't collect computer games, but I think she understands men just need to do these things. My dad is always interested when he comes round and asks to see what new stuff I've found.

**RG: What would you advise anyone starting a collection?**

**JC:** Don't rush in to any expensive purchases, take time to research what you're interested in and watch what's happening on eBay. Quite often something you think is rare isn't rare at all. Enjoy yourself and don't take it too seriously, they're just games!

If you have a collection that you feel the rest of Retro Gamer's readership needs to know about then please contact us at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.




» Another rare Master System, and another we never knew existed until now.

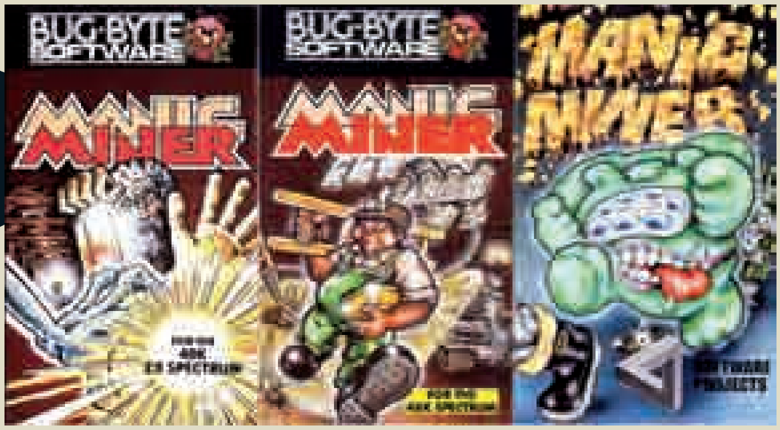


# BACK TO THE EIGHTIES




**December 1983 – 1 million Spectrums can't be wrong, the ITV Micro almost materialises, Mr Wimpy goes large, the Software Club starts, and Jet Set Willy arrives to enlighten/plague your lives forever. Richard Burton goes off to find Maria…**

# THE LATEST NEWS FROM DEC 1983




» *Manic Miner*, a game split between two companies and three different inlays.

**Sinclair claims that 9 December was the day the millionth Spectrum rolled off the production line in Dundee. It still had a little way to go to catch the ZX81 which was reported to have sold 1.1 million machines, but with sales averaging 50,000 units a month, Spectrum would soon reach that target.**

Liverpudlian coder Bug-Byte was coming to terms with the loss of its main cash cow, *Manic Miner*. Former employee Alan Maton left the company in August to start a new software house called Software Projects. The game's author, Matthew Smith, also left to become a Software Projects director, taking his creations with him after revoking Bug-Byte's licence to produce the game.

The first run of Software Projects' *Manic Miner* hit shops in November, but Bug-Byte was left with its remaining stocks to sell and no licence to manufacture further copies. With two companies selling the same game, it would be interesting to see who had the better Christmas sales figures.

A bigger blow to Bug-Byte was that Smith's new game also went to Software Projects with him. *Jet Set Willy* was due for an early-December release on the Spectrum with the C64 conversion appearing just before Christmas. The C64 version of *Manic Miner* was also ready for release. Good times for Software Projects, not so for Bug-Byte.

Ironically, Bug-Byte released its latest game, *The Birds And The Bees*, for Spectrum this month. Featuring Boris Bee from Birkenhead (no really) the graphics were Smith's final Bug-Byte hurrah before legging it with *Willy* in hand. He was not credited for his work and, presumably, not paid either.

The BBC's rival TV broadcaster, ITV was planning another challenge. The Independent Television Companies Association were to take a ballot in December to decide whether to launch their own ITV-branded computer. A machine was already in place, Transam Computers had designed a Z80-based machine with 64K and the usual specs priced at £399, so everything was set for the ballot. The vote took place on 12 December and the independent TV companies voted not to proceed with the ITV Micro.

The ever expanding Ocean led software down a foreboding and inevitable path, with



» ITV was on the verge of producing its own computer, which may or may not have looked like this.

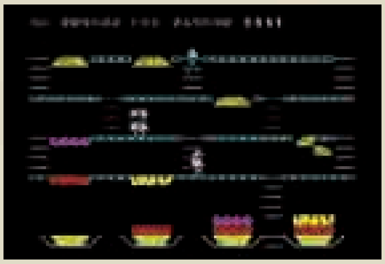
the first of many licensed tie-in games. Be it TV, film or, as in this case, a pulverised clump of lard and beef, licensed games would become part and parcel of the 8-bit gaming boom. Ocean introduced the world of computer-based fast-food gaming to the public with *Mr Wimpy* – The Hamburger Game (The Greatest Game Under The Bun).

The Software Club began advertising this month with full-page ads in the computing press, although most people remember its later efforts with the flyers inserted into various magazines offering three games for 99p each, on the proviso you buy six full-price games a year from its monthly catalogue. The problem was the games available were usually less than brilliant and slightly overpriced. *OutRun* on Amstrad still ticks us off.

Also being heavily advertised was 3-Deep Space by Postern. Available for a range of 8-bit machines, the game promised true 3D stereoscopic gaming. That's a fancy way of saying you get to wear a pair of those cardboard glasses with the red-and-blue plastic lenses while playing. The game itself wasn't great and the 3D effect was less than impressive. Thankfully, the programmer, Mike Singleton, left Postern and started writing for *Beyond*, producing the wonderful *The Lords Of Midnight*, among others.

Salamander Software announced a licensing agreement with Llamasoft's Jeff Minter to convert his extensive Vic-20 back catalogue onto other machines including Dragon 32, Spectrum and BBC Micro. The first wave of conversions would include *Laser Zone*, *Hover Bovver*, *Gridrunner* and *Matrix*.

Minter was adding the finishing touches to *Revenge Of The Mutant Camels* on C64,



» *Mr Wimpy* (Spectrum): The meat-based fast-food licensed game was okay, but it didn't come with fries.

## 1983

### DECEMBER NEWS



» Dennis Wilson, founder Beach Boy, died at just 39 years old.

On 8 December the House of Lords took a vote on whether or not to allow television cameras into their chamber to televise live debates for the first time. With an overwhelming majority, the Lords voted yes and immediately pressure was exerted on the House of Commons to follow suit. Debates raged about the pros and cons of such a decision before they finally succumbed to the television cameras almost six years later.

27 December saw an impressive show of seasonal goodwill to all men, when Pope John Paul II took a festive trip to prison to visit Mehmet Ali Agca. This was the man who attempted to assassinate the Pope in 1981, and although the Pope was seriously hurt in the incident, he still found it in himself to pardon him. However, he drew the line at giving him any Christmas presents such as a Terry's Chocolate Orange( or a novelty Pope on a Rope soap).

The sad news that founder member of The Beach Boys Dennis Wilson had died came on 28 December. The only member of the band to actually partake in any surfing activities, Wilson, ironically, drowned during a swim from his boat moored in Marina del Rey, California, while under the influence of alcohol. His good vibrations ended at the tragically young age of just 39.



» He's soapy, he's Popey, he's hanging off a ropey – it's Pope On A Rope Soap! Available from shops… maybe… Don't take our word for it.




» Buy any three for 99p and we'll send you a wafer-thin catalogue of stuff companies can't sell.

which was due just before Christmas. The next game after that was *Megagalactic Llamas Battle At The Edge Of Time* for Vic-20.

For wannabe programmers, relief came in the form of Gilsoft's new adventure-creation software, The Quill. Who'd have thought that a utility from a small indy company would spawn an adventure software industry of its own in the coming years. The likes of Zenobi, 8th Day Software, Level 9 and Melbourne House all released software produced by The Quill.

Not a month seems to go by without a new publication being produced. *Dragon World* for the Dragon machines had a feature on the *Dragon 64* and type-ins aplenty leaving space for little else in its mere 16 pages of coverage (including covers). In a similar vein, the first issue of bi-monthly magazine *Acorn Programs*




» Two games from Llamasoft: one ready for release and one being worked on for Vic-20 owners to savour in the future.




» The Quill spawned a market for adventurers to write and sell their own software.

was available, containing almost exclusively type-ins.

Pick of the new magazine releases was *Commodore Horizons* by Sunshine Books. It had a slightly more serious edge but still managed to cover a bit of everything. And yes, there were type-ins in that, too… Yawn.

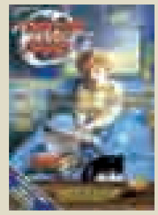
In the computing press, *C&VG* reviewed *Bewitched* (Imagine, Vic-20), *Pole Position* (Atari, Atari 400/800), *Ant Attack* (Quicksilva, Spectrum), *Barmy Burgers* (Spectrum, Blaby), *Purple Turtles* (Quicksilva, C64), *Pooyan* (Datasoft, Atari), *Stix* (Supersoft, C64) and *Zalaga* (Aardvark Software, BBC Micro), which was *C&VG*'s Game Of The Month.

The winter edition of *TV Gamer* added to its directory of console games, including new and recommended releases. Titles that fell into both categories included *Enduro* (Activision, Atari 2600), *Ghosts Manor/Spike's Peak* (Xonox, Atari 2600) – a double-ended cartridge (two games for the price of one), *Donkey Kong Jr* (CBS Electronics, ColecoVision), *Fortress Of Narzod* and *Webwarp* (both MB Electronics, Vectrex) and *Pinball* (Mattel Electronics, Intellivision).

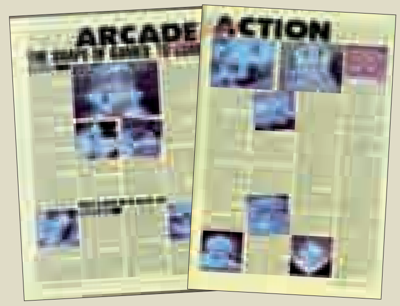
*Sinclair User* reviewed a select cross-section of Spectrum games including *Corridors Of Genon* (New Generation), *Manic Miner* (Bug-Byte), *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* (Crystal Computing), *Pyramid* (Fantasy Software) and the adventure *Oracle's Cave* (Doric).

## THIS MONTH IN…

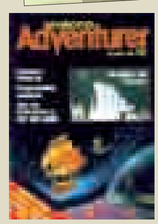
### Computer & video games



*C&VG*'s interesting arcade section focused on laser-disk games this month – which naturally meant a look at the new *Dragon's Lair* game from Don Bluth. Needless to say they wet their knickers, although they did point out it was expensive to play and dead slow. They forgot to mention the lack of gameplay…



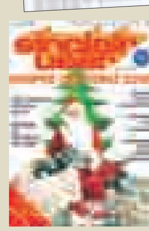

### Micro Adventurer



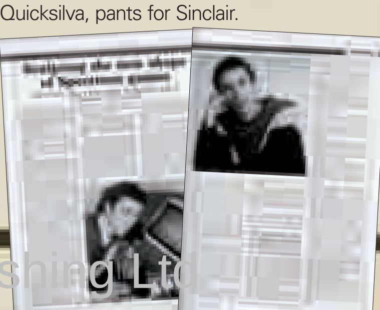

For the more adventurous gamer, *Micro Adventurer*'s second issue featured an article on cult TV show *The Prisoner*, seemingly attempting to unlock the meaning of the episodes and deciphering the plot twists like a text adventure. Fancy a Number Two? Just had one thanks…



### Sinclair User



*SU* interviewed Sandy White, sculptor and creator of *Ant Attack*. Although Quicksilva had released the game, and made lots of cash, initially Sinclair Research was offered the title but was unable to view the video tape presentation White had sent them. Good for Quicksilva, pants for Sinclair.



## CHARTS

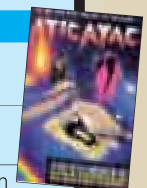
### DEC 1983

**ATARI 2600**



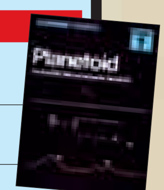
1 Pole Position (Atari)
2 Enduro (Activision)
3 Battle Zone (Atari)
4 River Raid (Activision)
5 Donkey Kong (CBS)

**SPECTRUM**




1 Atic Atac (Ultimate)
2 The Pyramid (Fantasy)
3 Flight Simulation (Psion/Sinclair)
4 Manic Miner (Bug-Byte)
5 Ant Attack (Quicksilva)

**BBC**




1 Planetoid (Acornsoft)
2 Rocket Raid (Acornsoft)
3 Hopper (Acornsoft)
4 Alien Swirl (Program Power)
5 Monsters (Acornsoft)

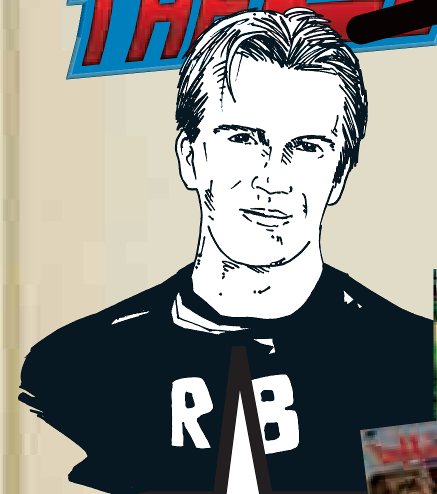
**MUSIC SINGLES CHART NOV '83**

1 Only You (Flying Pickets)
2 Love Of The Common People (Paul Young)
3 Hold Me Now (Thompson Twins)
4 My Oh My (Slade)
5 Let's Stay Together (Tina Turner)

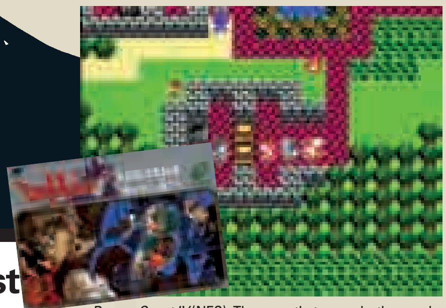


# BACK TO THE ~~EIGHTIES~~ 90s

# THE LATEST NEWS FROM MARCH 1990



**Dragon Quest punch-ups, Monty Mole, Speedball 2, Sega's Game Gear on the way and Game Boy gets colourful, not to mention a simultaneous dose of the Klax (I say…) – it can only be March 1990. Richard Burton applies the ointment…**



» *Dragon Quest IV* (NES): The game that caused a thousand black eyes (sort of). Who said videogames lead to violence?

In Japan, gamers were going bonkers over the release of the fourth game in the *Dragon Quest* RPG series. The NES version, although released in Japan in late February, was still in very short supply with huge queues of people lining up in the vain attempt to get their hands on a copy of *Dragon Quest IV*. Such was the mania for the game, developed by Chunsoft and published by Enix, that a reported 1.3 million units were sold on day one.

With dwindling stocks of carts available, tension in stores rose with several instances of games being snatched out of paying customer's hands. It wasn't like that when *Horace And The Spiders* came out here.

Virgin Mastertronic, the company responsible for marketing the Sega Master System, announced that it would start re-issuing older Master System titles at a budget price. Games such as *Enduro Racer* and *Transbot* would be available for £12.99 as opposed to the original price of £25. Rumours that Sega might even consider



» *Enduro Racer* (Master System): *Enduro Racer* was one of a handful of games that was re-issued in budget form.



» *Speedball 2* (Amiga): This game has to be one of the most playable ever made. Even better with ice cream…

putting more than one game on a cartridge in the future were also rife.

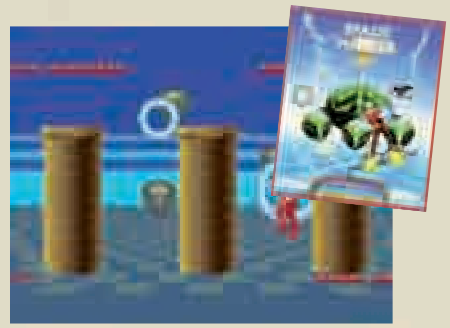
Monty Mole, the star of many an 8-bit platform game, was due to make his graphically enhanced farewell on the Atari ST and Amiga. The game, *Impossamole*, was due out around Easter and was once again distributed by Gremlin, although development was actually by Core Design.

A game in the development stage, but still highly anticipated, was *Speedball 2*, the long-awaited sequel to the original hit game. Once again, the Bitmap Brothers would be developing the game, which would became one of the best 16-bit games around.

Not content with developing *Speedball 2*, the Bitmap team was also working on its next title, the graphically lovely but incredibly hard game *Cadaver* which was looking to be finished in time for a summer release on ST, Amiga and PC formats.

Another sequel in development was *Chase HQ II: Special Criminal Investigation*. Ocean proudly announced its acquisition of the licence to create the sequel to *Chase HQ*, a game that sold very well. Although *Chase HQ II* was a decent game, the jerky graphics and lack of a sensation of speed made for a ropey conversion on both 16-bit machines – and yet it still sold huge numbers.

More arcade conversions were released during March, this time by Elite. The mediocre *Overlander* hit the shelves the same time as *Space Harrier*, the classic Sega game. Elite had previously released the original *Space Harrier* minus a few levels on the Amiga and ST, but this latest release rectified all that by including the missing levels plus a few extra bits. *Space Harrier: Return To The Fantasy Zone* was



» *Space Harrier II* (Amiga): Another sequel that doesn't quite hit the mark. Welcome to the Fantasy Zone? Welcome to the dustbin more like…

playable, although rocking on a broken swivel chair isn't the same in a hydraulic cabinet.

Strangely, *Grandslam* released *Space Harrier 2* for the Amiga and ST at the same time, maybe with one eye on cashing in on the release of the newly re-invigorated original.

The arcade conversion frenzy also stretched as far as Game Boy with news that *Bubble Bobble* would be appearing in the UK on the handheld in the coming months. Having already been released in the US, and becoming a resounding hit, it bode very well for UK fans of Bub, Bob and the Baron.

If there was ever an award for the fastest conversion of an arcade game to a home system that would surely have gone to Domark for its work on the arcade conversion of Atari game *Klax*. Atari was so keen to get the home versions of its game released that it lent Domark the original unreleased




» *Bubble Bobble* (Game Boy): The cutesy classic gets the handheld treatment and plays very well. Just wait for when the Game Boy Color comes out!

## 1990

### MARCH NEWS



» Looting, anarchy, cars set on fire and ugly skirmishes – just because one bloke found a hair in his pasty…

On 10 March 1990 a reporter for the *Observer* newspaper was tried and sentenced to death for allegedly spying for Israel. Farzad Bazoft, along with British nurse Daphne Parish who had driven the reporter to a military compound where an explosion had taken place, was arrested in September and then stood trial seven months later. Parish was sentenced to 15 years in jail while Bazoft was received the death penalty. Despite government efforts and international calls for clemency, the reporter was hung on 15 March. Parish was later released from prison on 16 July 1990.



» The giant Wang Laboratories produced this PC terminal with built-in flux capacitor. Handy for doing away with long loading times…

31 March saw a huge anti-Poll Tax rally in London degenerate into one of the worst riots ever seen in the capital. Over a hundred thousand people were demonstrating against the Poll Tax, which later saw Trafalgar Square transformed into a battleground between police and protesters. Cars were set alight, shops were looted, over a hundred people were injured and there were 340 arrests. Bet the street cleaners had a bit of a job in the morning…

And finally, Dr An Wang, head of Wang Laboratories and inventor of new computer technologies including the pulse transfer controller device, died on 24 March aged 70. Apparently he never played *Football Manager* on a ZX81…




» *Klax* (Atari ST): Dig out yer grout – proof that not all tile games are dull as ditchwater.

arcade PCB. This helped ensure that *Klax* would become the first game to receive a simultaneous debut across arcade and home computer versions. A release date was pencilled in for the end of the month.

Atari's handheld Lynx console underwent a price cut to try and counter Game Boy's dominance in the market. Although not yet officially released in the UK (May was mooted by Atari as a possible launch month) the Lynx was expected to have a price of £99.99. Cynical people might say this price cut was pre-empting the imminent release of the Sega Game Gear which, reportedly, would be released at… wait for it… £99.99…

Furthermore, its arch nemesis, the Game Boy, was also undergoing a colourful transformation with news that the first colour-screen Game Boys would be available in the United Kingdom, via import from Japan, some time in the coming months.



» The old lady of computer magazines, *Computer & Video Games*, celebrates its hundredth issue. No telegram from the Queen, though.

*Computer & Video Games* magazine celebrated a milestone this month with its hundredth issue. Quite a feat when you consider the sheer range of gaming magazines available to the computer-owning public at the time. Among their reviews and attaining their *C&VG* stamp of approval were: *Midwinter* (Rainbird, Atari ST), *Dragon's Breath* (Palace Software, Amiga), *Golden Axe* (Sega, Master System), *Super Hang-On* (Sega, Mega Drive) and *BC Kid* (Hudsoft, PC-Engine).

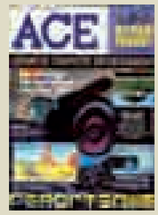
The *Games Machine* awarded its TGM Star Player award to games that were above and beyond the normal gaming fodder. Winners of the badge of honour this month were *The Lost Patrol* (Ocean, Amiga), *Super Shinobi* (Sega, Mega Drive), *Damocles: Mercenary 2* (Novagen, Atari ST), *Rainbow Islands* (Ocean, Amiga) and the superbly titled *Dr Plummet's House Of Flux* (Micro Illusions, Amiga).

*Mean Machines* own award, the Mega Game, found its way onto the mantelpieces of *Duck Tales* (Capcom, NES), *California Games* (Sega/Epyx, Master System), *Contra* (Nintendo, Game Boy), *Gauntlet III* (Mindscape, NES), *Pac-Mania* (Namco/Tecmagick, Master System) and *Gynoug* (NCS Corp, Mega Drive), which was later renamed *Wings Of Wor*.

*Zero* magazine had its own award for top-rating games, the Zero Hero. *Pipe Mania* (Empire, Atari ST) and *Midwinter* (Rainbird, Atari ST) were the only 16-bit recipients while their console-based award, the Console Classic, saw *Gates Of Zendocon* (Atari, Atari Lynx) and *Super Shinobi* (Sega, Mega Drive) triumphing.

Finally, FAST (the Federation Against Software Piracy) were infiltrating every magazine that had a whiff of a computer games about it with their eye-catching and strangely memorable adverts warning against the dangers of software piracy. Great adverts, but did anyone actually take a blind bit of notice? No, we didn't either…

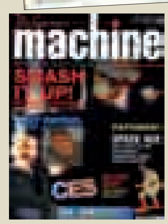
## THIS MONTH IN…




### ACE

*ACE* issue 30 featured an interview with *Discworld* author Terry Pratchett about how he used computers in his work and spare time. For writing, he used an Atari Portfolio; and for games, Pratchett had an Amstrad CPC 6128. Favourite games? Terry was a fan of *Batman* by Ocean, and *Manic Miner*, while he enjoyed dabbling with *Starglider* on PC.

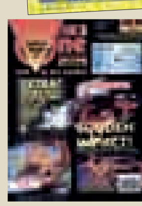





### THE GAMES MACHINE

*Rainbow Islands* review! Telecom Soft, who held the *Rainbow* licence, was bought by Microprose, who employed Graftgold to code the game. Taito pointed out that he original contract with Telecom prohibited third-party licensee involvement, so Ocean took over the rights.





### THE ONE

Issue 18 of *The One* focused on the unique game *Klax*, which was being converted by Domark for the home computer market and released by Atari for the arcade dwellers. The plan was for both companies to release their versions simultaneously – surely an exclusive happening in videogames land?




## CHARTS

### MARCH 1990

#### AMIGA



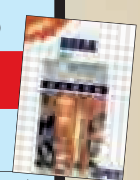
1. Double Dragon 2 (Virgin Mastertronic)
2. The Ninja Warriors (Virgin Mastertronic)
3. Ghosts 'N' Ghouls (Capcom/US Gold)
4. Future Wars (Palace Software)
5. Hard Drivin' (Domark)

#### ATARI ST



1. Chaos Strikes Back (FTL/Mirrorsoft)
2. Fighter Bomber (Activision)
3. Double Dragon 2 (Virgin Mastertronic)
4. The Ninja Warriors (Virgin Mastertronic)
5. Future Wars (Palace Software)

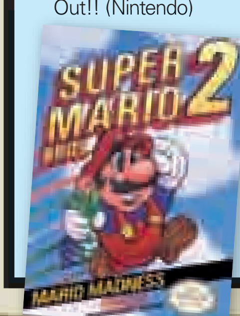
#### SEGA MASTER SYSTEM



1. California Games (Sega/Epyx)
2. Wonderboy III (Sega)
3. R-Type (Sega/Irem)
4. Ghostbusters (Sega/Activision)
5. World Soccer (Sega)

#### NINTENDO NES

1. Super Mario Bros 2 (Nintendo)
2. The Legend Of Zelda (Nintendo)
3. Rush'n Attack (Konami)
4. Robo Warrior (Jaleco/Nintendo)
5. Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! (Nintendo)



# SCUBA DIVE

## "DARLING IT'S BETTER, DOWN WHERE IT'S WETTER"






- » **PUBLISHER:** DURELL SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **GENRE:** FISH-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ZX SPECTRUM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+




## HISTORY

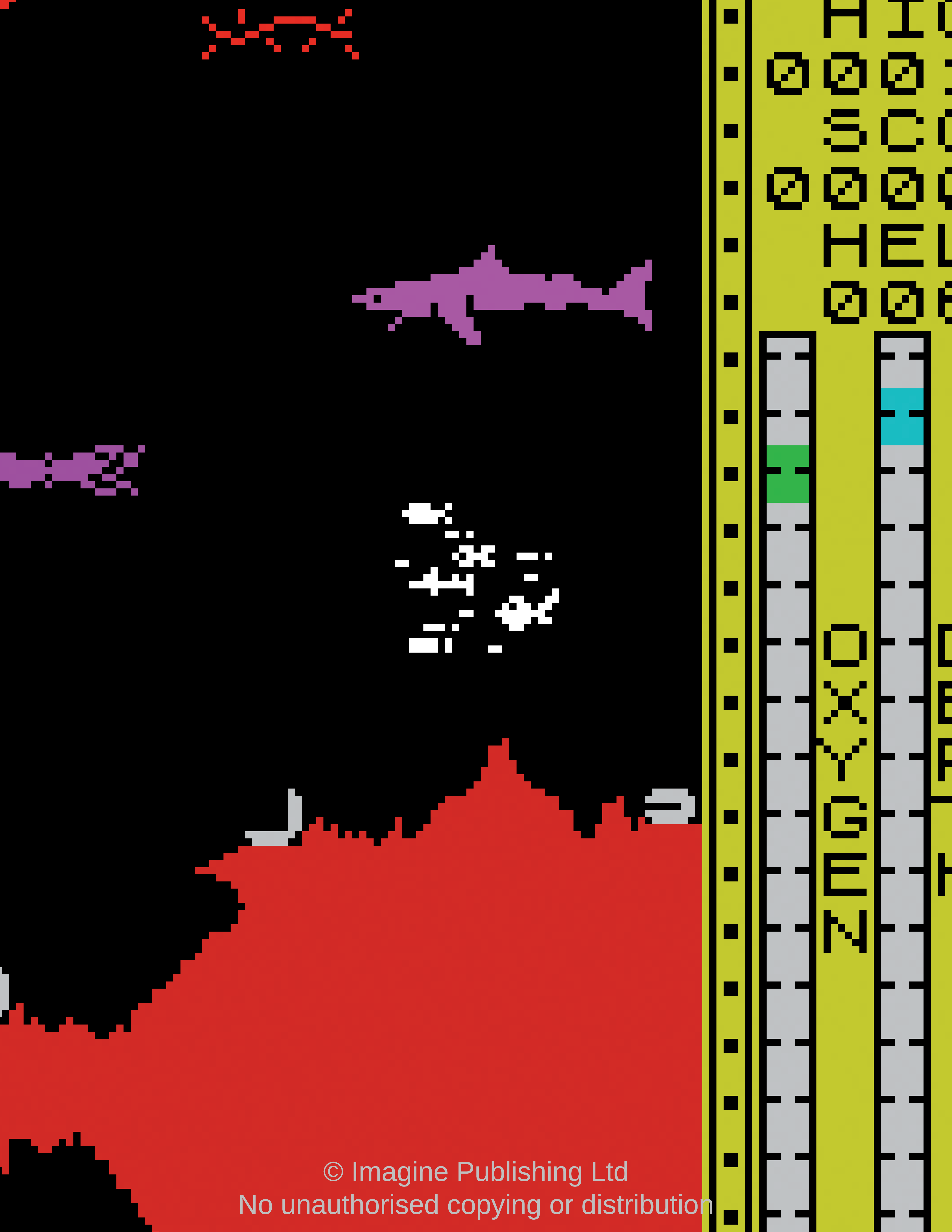
**A wise old crab by the name of Sebastian once told us: "Life under the sea is better than anything they've got up there."** He then burst into an impromptu song and dance and described to us a wonderful tale about life under the sea where the sturgeon and ray love to play and the ling are on the strings while the clams like to jam. Hang on a minute. That's actually Disney's *The Little Mermaid* we're thinking of.

Still, Sebastian's point remains relevant, and even if he isn't as hot as Ariel, he certainly knew what he was talking about. Mike Richardson obviously agrees, because his 8-bit creation *Scuba Dive* is a wonderful slice of aquatic action that proves that while life under the sea is undoubtebly fun if you're a mermaid or a red singing crab, it's not so great for the average pearl diver.

Diving into the inky blackness, your minuscule diver has to swim through the heavily infested waters and harvest pearls from the many clams that litter the surrounding rocks. Sharks, snakes, shoals of fish and all manner of aquatic nasties attempt to keep you from your goal, and a brush with any of them immediately results in the loss of a life. Even knocking in to too many rocks will cause you damage, so you're going to have to be really precise if you want your divers to nab those pearls and return to the awaiting boat (which occasionally moves) in one piece.

Explore far enough – while keeping an eye on your oxygen gauge – and you'll eventually discover a huge octopus that guards the gateway to deeper water and far bigger riches. A second octopus guards a huge chasm and even greater rewards, but we were far too scared to go down there and investigate on our own.

According to Sebastian, there's treasure beyond your wildest dreams and an ancient civilisation down there. But don't believe him, he's just a fictional talking crab.


OXYGEN

# THE HISTORY OF… DOOM



WHEN DOOM WAS RELEASED IN 1993, IT WAS GREETED WITH SUCH FERVOUR THAT ID SOFTWARE'S SERVER CRASHED. IT QUICKLY BECAME MORE THAN JUST A GAME – IT WAS LEGENDARY. MIKE TOOLEY DONS HIS ENVIRO SUIT TO FIND OUT WHY THE WHOLE WORLD LOVES BEING DOOMED

**DOOM is almost 15 years old. Since then, it has changed so much that the last part of the franchise, *DOOM 3: Resurrection Of Evil*, couldn't be any further from the original concept. But *DOOM* is a patient beast and not until gamers catch up with the product will id even begin to consider a fourth instalment. With *DOOM*, id hasn't been wrong yet.**

*DOOM 3* carries all the swagger and arrogance of the first outing, and is cited by many as being the game *DOOM* should have been. The truth is, *DOOM* could have been many things, which makes it hard to validate that statement. Indeed, a strong argument can be made either way, so let's take a look at 1992 to see where this all started.

id software circa 1992 was a very impressive place to be. Into its second year of independence, John Romero, Tom Hall, Adrian Carmack and John Carmack had proved that PCs could do more than Wordstar. id invoked magic with each piece of software it created, and garnered a savagely loyal following that was always impatient for new releases. A master of freeware distribution, id soon learned the merits of episodic content, and so it funnelled longevity into its titles by adding new worlds and levels to existing content. While working on the SNES port of *Castle Wolfenstein*, John Carmack stumbled across a routine that he believed would greatly speed up the development of 3D games. Soon this routine grew into the *DOOM* engine and a new era of in-game design dawned.

Debate ensued as to what sort of game would fit onto the incomplete engine, with discussion veering toward acquiring the *Alien* licence. However, the team agreed that a licence would prove far too restrictive. id had many great ideas, and while these were being fine-tuned, Carmack dubbed the undesigned game '*DOOM*'. He attributes the title to a scene from *The Colour Of Money* where Tom Cruise shows up at a pool hall with a custom pool cue in a case. 'What do you have in there?' someone asks him. 'DOOM', replied Cruise with a cocky grin. "That, and the resulting carnage, was how I viewed us springing the game on the industry," remembers a proud John Carmack.

Work originally started on *DOOM* in late 1992. While John Carmack worked on the engine, John Romero would sketch out early level design on a clever editor that he had developed, while Adrian toiled over creating *DOOM*'s visual realisation. Tom Hall, id's resident game designer found it all hard going. For Tom, good games didn't just happen: they came from careful planning. So, as the rest of id forged ahead he developed a Bible of all the things that the game should contain. John Romero would add to this on occasion, but while everyone at id was aware of the Bible, scant regard was paid to its actual contents. John Carmack underpins this, saying: "We worked from the technology toward the game. The style of play from *Wolfenstein* was clearly a good thing (in retrospect, it was the birth of an entirely new genre), and I had a pretty solid idea what the next step in the technology was going to be: arbitrary two-dimensional maps with variable floor and ceiling heights and table-based lighting.

Thematically, *DOOM* was viewed as '*Aliens* meets *Evil Dead II*'," he continues. "Tom was attempting to do 'real' design work at the beginning of the project but the rest of the team was pretty much pushing ahead with a 'just do it' approach. So careful planning lost out."

John Romero remembers this time slightly differently, however. "Tom started crafting the storyline in November 1992 and created the *DOOM* Bible, which turned out to be his initial ideas of where the story should go," he says.



It wasn't uncommon for the unearthly denizens to fight against each other. You could either watch the battle from a safe distance, or finish off the victor when the fight had finished.



# DOOM A-Z

**A is for Arch-Vile**
The most notorious of all the *DOOM* universe inhabitants, not only are they fast and deadly with magic spells, they also raise the dead creatures around them.

**B is for Big F**king Gun 9000**
The ultimate weapon in *DOOM*. One shot from the BFG 9000 will swallow even the toughest enemy in a hue of green plasma. Remember, don't stand too close.

**C is for Comic Book**
Between 1995 and 1996, four graphic novels were written about *DOOM* by Dafydd Ab Hugh and Brad Linaweaver, while Tom Grindberg of Marvel Comics released a limited-edition comic in 1996 for E3.

**D is for Duke Nukem 3D**
*Duke Nukem 3D* featured the *DOOM* space marine lying dead in a secret area. The quip, "that's one Doomed space marine" led id Software into litigation.

**E is for E1M1 to E100M100**
E is for episode and M is for map. The numbers signify game episodes and areas. This is normal speak for the *DOOM* community.

**F is for First-Person Shooter**
*DOOM* made the first-person shooter into the new black.

**G is for Gib**
This is the term that is used in a *DOOM* deathmatch when a character explodes on impact with a projectile.

**H is for Health**
It just doesn't seem to last very long in *DOOM*.

**I is for Imp**
The fire-spitting demons don't like your shotgun, unfortunately they're normally too far away for you to hit them. However, if you can get in close it usually hurts.

**J is for John Carmack**
The cleverest man on the planet. Without his technology *Commando* would be the ultimate frag-fest.

**K is for Keen**
The game that created the funds for id to make *DOOM*. Bless the lad, he even makes a cameo hanging from a rope.

**L is for Lost Soul**
They appear from nowhere and break the player's concentration, they are to *DOOM* what mutants are to *Defender*.

**M is for Mancubus**
Demons armed with rocket launchers. They hurt, so avoid these at all costs.

**N is for Nearly Invisible**
Yup, the spectre is nearly invisible, but not quite, shimmering nothingness gives way to their location and they take the form of any monster.

**O is for Online**
DOOM was the first series to deliver an action game to an online audience.

**P is for Pain Elemental**
The harbingers of lost souls, these guys mercilessly spit lost souls at the player and figure in some of the meatiest traps in the franchise.

**Q is for Quit**
The original *DOOM* would make fun of the player each time they quit the game with various remarks and put downs.

**R is for Romero**
The man who made *DOOM* and then spent three years telling everyone he had made it. Game designer par excellence. A genius.

**S is for Saw**
The most iconic of *DOOM*'s weapons, Black & Decker it isn't.

**T is for The Icon Of Sin**
The final boss of *DOOM II* and *Final DOOM*. The goat-headed demon is a real monster, surrounded by spikes, one of which has Romero's head impaled on it

**U is for Ultima**
The series of games that influenced John Carmack to make a 3D engine, then to make *DOOM*.

**V is for Violence**
A more violent franchise, with a higher kill count has never existed.

**W is for Wolfenstein**
The game that twice helped to get *DOOM* into development.

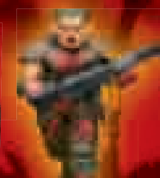
**X is for X-Rated Action**
*DOOM* is very gory and shouldn't be played by small children.

**Y is for Yoda**
Yoda takes on demon form in one an early *Star Wars Doom* WADs, complete with a rocket launcher.

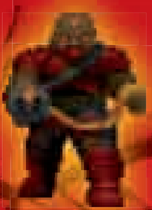
**Z is for Zombie**
The standard populace of the *DOOM* universe is made up of zombies, some bio-engineered, but many just dead space marines.

THE HISTORY OF...

# DOOM BESTIARY & WEAPONS



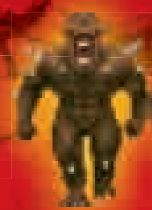
### Former Human
Former Humans are the weakest and most common monsters you will face in *DOOM*. You will slaughter a lot of them before you are done.



### Former Human Commando
These commandos are a real pain at long range. Their chain guns can lock on to you at a much greater distance than you can lock onto them. Avoid.



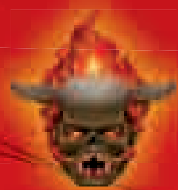
### Wolfenstein Soldier
Adaptations of the SS officers from *Wolfenstein 3D*. They always face you when they are firing their guns, no matter which direction they are firing.



### Imp
The missile-firing imp is a real nuisance. The most often encountered of the non-human monsters. You will be slaughtering a large number of these ugly things.



### Demon
Demons and Spectres can be deflected by obstacles when they charge at you. This makes them seem like they're running away, often running in a straight line until deflected again.



### Lost Souls
When attacking, Lost Souls act like missiles. They fly in a straight line toward their target, unable to turn or stop until they strike an obstacle, floor, ceiling, tree and so on.



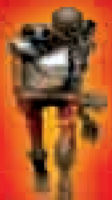
### Cacodemon
The hardest of all the standard enemies in the game. These floating gas bags of hate and fury fire what looks like balls of lightning at you with deadly intent.



### Hell Knight
Basically junior Barons of Hell, it's best to avoid their deadly fireballs and incredulous strength. Hell Knights and Barons of Hell are immune to each other's fireballs.



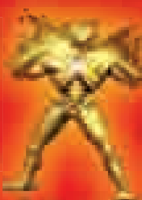
### Pain Elemental
They spit Lost Souls at their foes. Lost Souls are launched in attack mode at the Pain Elemental's target. It allows Pain Elementals to attack other members of their species.



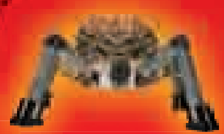
### Revenants
Bio-engineered demons. Their rockets will adjust their flight path to hit you if you try and dodge them, to the point of following you around corners.



### Mancubus
These obese monsters are a pain. Their flame throwers spew four or six fireballs in a fan pattern. It is not uncommon to get hit by one fireball while trying to dodge another.



### Arch-Viles
These legendary demons attack with a line-of-sight pillar of fire that will burn the hair off your chest and toss you up in the air for good measure. They can revive fallen monsters too.



### Spider Mastermind
The first boss in the *DOOM* franchise. It attacks with a single chain gun bolted to the front of its metallic undercarriage and moves like lightning.



### Cyber Demon
The toughest guy in *DOOM* has an attack pattern made up of three-rocket volleys, and his incredible armour makes him the king of carnage.



### Boss Brain
The severed head of John Romero must be destroyed to stop the Boss Shooter from spawning more monsters.



### Fists
Primary fire
A slow melee attack that does little damage



### Shotgun
Primary Fire
Gives a single burst of shells from short range. Does more damage if the target is closer and can do severe damage if the target is point-blank.



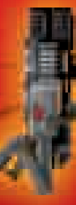
### Plasma Gun
Primary Fire
Fires low-speed projectiles that do considerable damage.



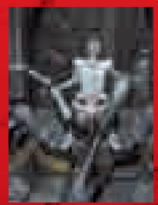
### Chain gun
Primary Fire
Fires bullets at a very rapid pace and does considerable damage per bullet. The most powerful of the automatic weapons.



### Super Shotgun
Primary Fire
Like the shotgun, but double-barrelled and twice as powerful.



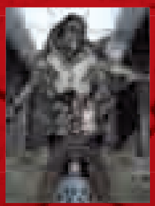
### BFG 9K
Primary Fire
Fires a ball of plasma that does extreme damage to a large area.



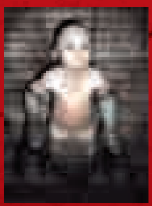
### Vagary
From *DOOM 3* Vagary is The Queen of the Trites, who makes life difficult with her telekinesis. She hurls spiked balls from around the room, and is painful and overwhelming.



### Machine Gun
Primary Fire
Automatic-ranged weapon that allows for a constant rate of fire, small damage but multiple hits creates a good balance.



### Saboth
Your old friend Sergeant Kelly has been transformed into this claw-throwing freak, and has somehow managed to hold on to his BFG just to make life difficult.



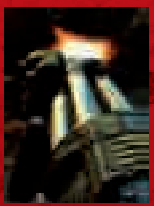
### Cherub
Be wary of their leap attack – the disorientating effects aren't nice when attacked by a group of their friends. They would be easy to take down if only they stopped flying.



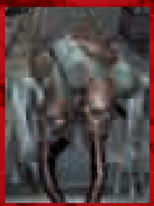
### Trites
They are ammunition suckers. Trites come in packs, and they simply suck the ammo away from you, harmless on their own, they tend to hunt in packs.



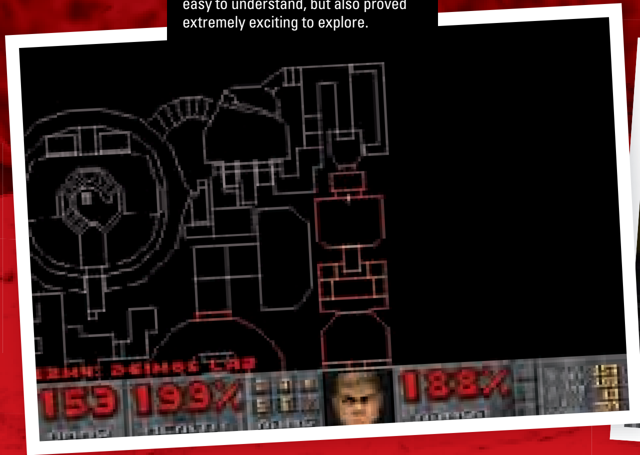
### Grenades
Primary Fire
You hold them in your hand for a period of time, then toss them at a target and wait for the explosion. Excessive damage.



### Primary Fire
Fires a high-speed projectile for extreme damage.



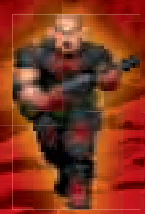
### Maggot
Fast but relatively weak demons. When they come in packs its best to use a machine gun as it works just fine on these low-hit-point demons.



The maps of *Doom* were not only easy to understand, but also proved extremely exciting to explore.

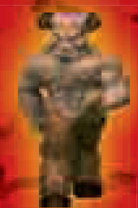


The Arch-Viles were deadly and proved tough to take down.



### Former Human Sergeant

Your basic shotgun-wielding undead psycho killer. These guys are absolute murder when in Nightmare mode!



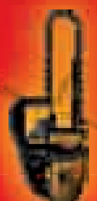
### Baron Of Hell

These insidious little monsters chase you down and have an enormous destructive power. Be quick or be dead.



### Arachnotron

Although Arachnotrons take a while to turn around to face you, they are not slow. These guys are quicker than demons and unleash green plasma bolts.



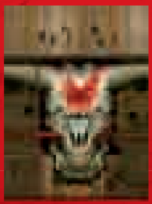
### Chainsaw

Primary Fire
Melee weapon with higher damage and rate of fire than your fists.



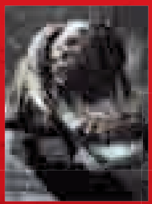
### Pistol

Primary Fire
Ranged attack that does minimal damage but allows for accuracy with a moderate rate of fire.



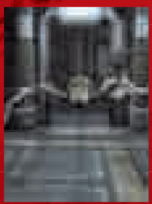
### Boss Shooter

The Boss Shooter is the invisible 'monster' that shoots the cubes that spawn into monsters. Can only be killed by killing the Boss Brain.



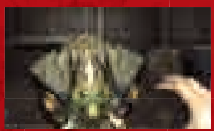
### Pinky Demon

These are fearsome marauders that swarm the player, and then start to bite. Our advice is to run, run and run faster.



### Tick

While they look similar to Trites, Ticks do considerably more damage and are far more dangerous. Two or three Tick explosions could spell the end. Tick, tick boom.



### Soul Cube

Primary Fire
Shoots a star-shaped object that drains health from the target and up to 1,000 points of damage. It can deliver up to 99 health points to whoever fired it.

"After that point, he mostly made lots of notes about ideas, drawings of the world map, sketches of game characters and so on. So, yes, there was a definite storyline created at the beginning of the project and we all started following that design."

Whatever the truth behind the Bible, Tom would be id's first casualty due to his differences with John Carmack. Tom was eventually replaced by Sandy Petersen. An industry veteran, Sandy proved the perfect counterbalance for John Romero. While John Romero designed levels of pure adrenalin that reflected the apex of gaming from the era, Sandy's levels were much more sinister. Nothing was obvious, objects were littered throughout each level, but their uses were specific. If a player misused an object, the game got harder, buttons the player had to press and doors that had to be opened would all unleash more hell spawn. This balance between the two designers ensured end users would never feel comfortable in *DOOM*'s horrific world.

Bob Prince a veteran from id's back catalogue was brought in to add sound to the game. Bob visited the office occasionally but was never in-house; his remoteness led him to Tom's *DOOM* Bible, which became his inspiration for the music. "What helped the most with the sound in *DOOM* was the *DOOM* Bible that Tom Hall compiled," he confirms. "Much of what was in it never appeared in the game, but it set a mood for starting on the project. Within a few months of receiving that document, I had roughed out a lot of music and most of what turned out to be final sound effects."

The sound process was far from linear on the fledgling game engine, and the challenges were vast. "With *DOOM*, I was supposed to have some software that would allow me to do this sort of thing, but it never got programmed," explains Bob. "I depended on John Romero to plug the sounds in for me, and I could then see if they fit for timing. If they didn't, I would try to get a mental picture of what was wrong, correct it on my computer, save it on the network and then John [Romero] would plug it in for another trial." That the sound became such an integral part of the *DOOM* experience is tantamount to the technical genius id possessed at that time.

Away from id and the development of *DOOM*, the gaming press was going mad for a new format that was fast replacing disk and cartridge-based systems, CD-ROMs. *Myst* and *The 7th Guest* had turned heads the world over, with their incredible visuals demonstrating the power of the new medium. The US gaming media especially, was talking about how gaming was about to change forever. With their full-motion videos, and CD sounds, talk of how *Myst* and *The 7th Guest* would replace the iconic games of the Eighties and early-Nineties populated magazines like *Wired*. Even the console manufacturers looked to be getting in on the act with new CD announcements.

Jay Wilbur, id's business manager explored this technology and brought *Myst* to the guys at id. Unanimous in its condemnation, id hated *Myst*. Even Sandy, who had worked for years with Sid Meier at

## DOOM MEETS ITS NEMESIS

On 20 February 1999, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris killed 13 people at Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado. As the world looked on in shock, few could have foreseen the media backlash that hit videogames, and id in particular. Klebold and Harris were fans of *DOOM* and *Quake*, and the media were quick to jump on this. The *Washington Post* said, "The online gaming world is a dark, dangerous place where the two boys hung out." The fervour increased as news that Harris was an active member of the modding community caused the *Post* to headline its newspaper with the instructions Harris had left on one of his maps. "The platoon guarding the teleporter is VERY large, so beware. Good luck, marine, and don't forget, KILL 'EM AAAAALLLL!!!!!"



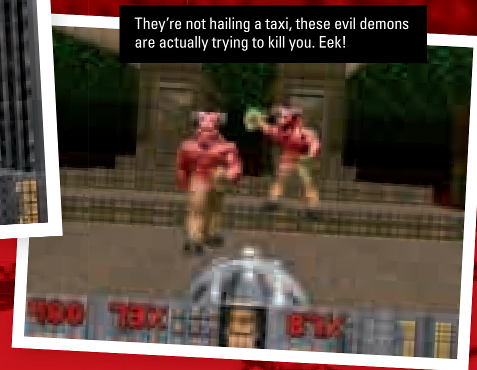
*Doom* was blamed for inciting violence in school children.

Gamers came out to protest against the accusations, but it the industry was left to defend itself. "We'd have to really be either extremely stubborn, in deep denial, or lying to say that the violence in our games doesn't affect people," said Mike Gummelt, a Raven Software programmer. "But I don't think *DOOM*'s the problem, it's the free proliferation and general acceptance of violence in our society – in movies, on TV and (to a lesser degree due to limits of realism) in games. That kind of widespread violence and cruelty in media definitely takes the shock out of violence and gore."

The situation shook all connected with *DOOM*. Although, aware that there was no blame, id held a dignified silence. The truth is, that despite the horror of Columbine, no one will ever know if Klebold and Harris were trying to re-create *DOOM*.

# THE HISTORY OF... DOOM


*Doom* features many memorable enemies, but the Cacodemon is easily our favourite.


They're not hailing a taxi, these evil demons are actually trying to kill you. Eek!

Microprose, didn't like it. Galvanised by the team, Jay set about trying to get some press for the as-yet-unfinished *DOOM*. Unfortunately, the gaming press weren't interested, and a short broadcast on local television showing the id guys at work did little to bolster *DOOM's* profile.

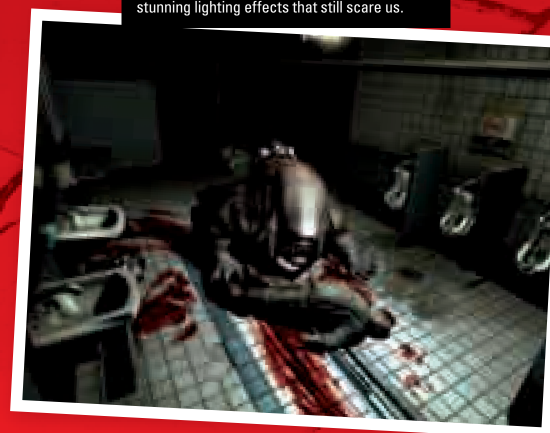
Knowing full well that the game would be a smash if people new about it, Jay began selling *DOOM* in a different way. "We don't care if you make money off this shareware demo," Jay told retailers. "Move it. Move it in mass quantities." The retailers couldn't believe their ears, no one had ever told them not to pay royalties. But Jay was insistent. "Take *DOOM* for nothing, keep the profit. My goal is distribution. *DOOM* is going to be *Wolfenstein* on steroids, and I want it far and wide. I want you to stack *DOOM* high. In fact, I want you to do advertising for it, too, because you're going to make money off it. So take this money that you might have given me in royalties and use it to advertise the fact that you're selling *DOOM*." Jay got plenty of takers. And it was advertised by retailers right across America, from Wal-Mart to Babbage's (now known as GameStop). The original id press release adorned the walls of retailers, stating that *DOOM* would be ready for release in autumn 1993. At this time details of the game were sparse except for the revelations that *DOOM* would show visible monster and scenery damage. Few screens were made available, but the ones that were made public showed some of the game's more spectacular weapons and monsters in action.

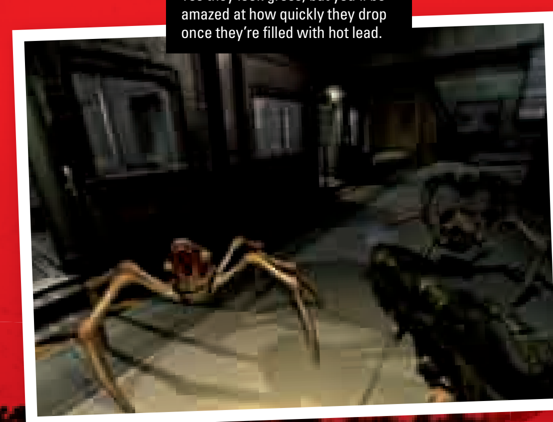
The gaming press were quick to follow the retailers, acutely aware that something big was happening at id Software. Previously closed doors were now opened, and column inches gave way to features and articles on the game. This groundswell didn't detract from the development. If anything, it made the team more resolute to deliver John Carmack's vision of something, "Bigger, badder and better than everything that had gone before."

Development continued swiftly and in June 1993 the guys at id Software had a meeting. Aware that it was going to miss its autumn release date, it looked at the game itself. Without a strict format or direction, *DOOM* had taken on so many elements that it lacked purpose and an independent identity. The decision was made to narrow the experience. The score and all the elements that contributed to scoring points were removed from the game. A life bar replaced the three-man allocation of the first beta builds and the BFG (Big F**king Gun) had its parameters changed. Originally a multi-fireball-spewing smart gun, it was honed to be a single-shot weapon that would provide instant death on contact with any foes. More significantly, the gameplay was honed as well. John Carmack explains why the game was changed and the issues that led to the slowdown in *DOOM's* development. "Speed was an issue. One big ball is a ton more efficient than a couple of hundred little ones," he says. "The other thing is that the spew of little balls just wasn't that effective. Usually only one or two would hit a given target at a reasonable range, so it didn't deliver that much damage against a single opponent. We wanted the BFG to be a weapon that obliterated rooms full of enemies, and no directed weapon ever really managed that. We originally had little items that you could collect to get an extra life (like coins in *Super Mario*), but it finally sunk in for me during *DOOM* that computer games don't have to be like arcade games, and that the concept of limited numbers of tries just really didn't apply."

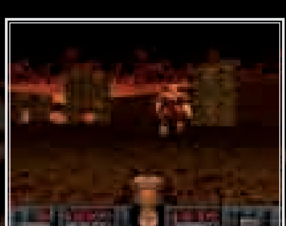
The final crunch of *DOOM* progressed, morphing from the early Alpha builds that were demo-ed through magazines and download services, into the game we know today. And, as John Carmack welded the multiplayer elements into place that John Romero would later coin 'Deathmatch', id realised that it had made one of gaming's very few complete products.

When *DOOM* eventually arrived on 10 December 1993, the id server, that was to deliver the game to

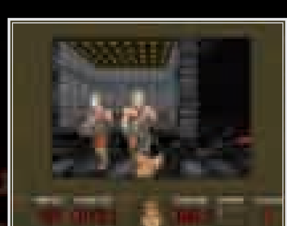

The third *Doom* looked incredible and boasted stunning lighting effects that still scare us.


Yes they look gross, but you'll be amazed at how quickly they drop once they're filled with hot lead.

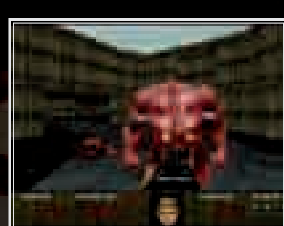
## THE CONVERSIONS OF DOOM



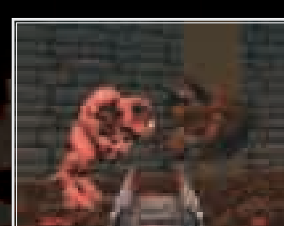
**PSX/SAT**
The PlayStation struggles with *DOOM*, but makes a good fist of retaining the experience. The levels are shorter and there are sounds missing. It has a slower frame rate but, all in all, it's not bad. The Saturn has it all, but even its two processors can't do *DOOM* justice and it manages to run at 25fps.



**3DO**
Trip Hawkins was desperate to get *DOOM* on the 3DO to showcase its power. And showcase it certainly does, the game stutters like stop motion. It looks like *DOOM* and it sounds like *DOOM*, but all hope is lost when you can't tell whether you are moving or standing still. The worst version yet.



**JAGUAR**
The Jaguar received a particularly impressive port of *DOOM*. Everything was in position and even the speed wasn't lost on Atari's (apologies in advance) 'doomed' console. If you can see beyond the Jaguar's cumbersome control pad and the total lack of a soundtrack, it's a solid port.



**N64**
The home of the definitive *DOOM* port, *DOOM* 64 has all the joys of PC *DOOM* but with the rather joyous N64 pad. Everything is here, even the speed (unusual for N64). The monsters have also had a reworking to sharpen them up and some have had additional features added, too. A must-play for all *DOOM* fans.



**ATARI 2600**
The ultimate *DOOM* hoax, *Electronic Gaming Monthly* ran a story based on some '2600' screens that were made available as part of a programming project that set the internet alight. *DOOM* couldn't be done on the 2600 said the cynics, only to be countered by screen shots. This is some excellent stuff.

the masses outside of retail, crashed as 8,000 people clamoured for the first levels, and on commercial networks such as America Online users crammed into electronic 'rooms' waiting for their chance to download the program. Depending on the speed of the user's modem, transfers took between one and four hours.

"It was a mob scene the night *DOOM* came out," said Debbie Rogers, forum leader of America Online's game section. "If we weren't on the other side of a phone line, there would have been bodily harm." About twenty thousand America Online users snapped up copies at launch. That, however, was just the start. Some six months later id released figures stating that over 1.7 million copies of *DOOM* were installed and in use across the US. The *DOOM* creators had somehow ventured into the eye of the storm. It wasn't that *DOOM* was selling, it was the fact that it was being played, over and over. The term deathmatch entered the English language and, despite the fact that many gamers today have still not experienced *DOOM* in LAN or an online scenario, the legend of the experience grew.

The clamour for a game so totally modern has been seen since, but it was the values of gameplay that made *DOOM* a continuing success. John Carmack misunderstood the product, while John Romero knew full well why *DOOM* was such a success.

At its heart, *DOOM* was *Gauntlet* in 3D: find the key to open the door, kill the enemies in the levels while replenishing health, find the exit and repeat. The BFG replaced potions, and enviro suits replaced magic amulets. While death permeated the *Gauntlet* experience, bosses and sub-bosses embellished *DOOM* and fantasy evolved into hell. id distilled the formula that had defined a generation and made it grow up. Every bit a technological spearhead, *DOOM* oozed the best arcade experiences of the Eighties and early-Nineties. It was fast paced, mystical and challenging but, more importantly, demanding of the player's attention. *DOOM* cast a tall shadow over the gaming landscape that few would escape.

By the time 1994 arrived, 3DO and Atari had both launched new consoles. Technology was king and both companies saw the merits of having what was perceived as the absolute technological gaming monster on their consoles. The conversions that followed would hallmark the future for the *DOOM* franchise on home formats. Both consoles struggled under the weight of John Carmack's engine. The 3DO produced a similar but much slower game than the original, and with the pace gone it was little more than a homage to *DOOM*. On the other hand, the Jaguar baulked at the resolutions needed to display the game, and despite offering a reasonable port could only operate in a windowed mode that used less than a third of the available screen.

Even Bill Gates got in on the act when he announced Windows 95 and the arrival of Direct X at a developer's conference, as *Masters Of DOOM* author David Kushner recollects in his bestselling novel, "As the lights fell, a video screen lowered above the stage – it was time for the main event. The crowd cheered as *DOOM*'s familiar corridors began to roll. But it wasn't the *DOOM* soldier chasing the demons, it was… Bill Gates. Microsoft's fearless leader was superimposed running inside the game in a long, black trench coat and brandishing a shotgun. Gates stopped running and addressed the crowd about Windows 95 as a gaming platform: a platform that could deliver cutting-edge multimedia experiences like *DOOM*. But no sooner had he begun, an Imp monster from the game jumped out, and asked Gates for an autograph. Gates responded by raising his

# OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

## GAMES USING A MODIFIED DOOM ENGINE



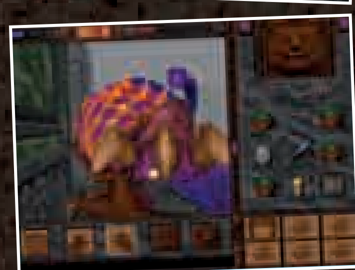
**AMULETS & ARMOR**
**Released:** 1997
**System:** PC
Developed by United Software Artists, *Amulets & Armor* was released in 1997. The game plays out through a series of quests and, in essence, is *DOOM* in a role-playing game suit. This may be great fun, but unbalanced gameplay makes this a short-lived experience.



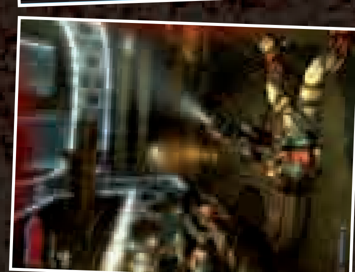
**HERETIC/HERETIC: SHADOW OF THE SERPENT RIDERS**
**Released:** 1996
**Systems:** PC
Raven teamed up with id again to bring this majestic fantasy masterpiece to the world. The *DOOM* engine was edited to allow the player the ability to look up and down. The level design easily matches the best that even *DOOM* has to offer, don't miss it. *Heretic: Shadow Of The Serpent Riders* was developed at the same time and served as the third game in the series. Many expansion packs followed.



**HEXEN**
**Released:** 1997
**Systems:** N64, PSone, Saturn
Raven teamed up with id to deliver a fantasy environment to the *DOOM* legacy. The aim of the game is to destroy Korax, one of three Serpent Riders that feature throughout the series. This is all that *DOOM* is, but in a different setting with different monsters.



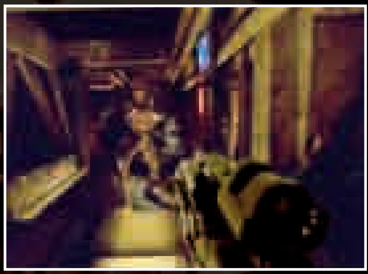
**SHADOWCASTER**
**Released:** 1993
**Systems:** PC
This was the first game to make use of the *DOOM* engine outside of id. Here, the player can transform into various creatures including a dragon, a massive cat-like animal and a tentacle-wielding shadow gazer. As development started around the same time as *DOOM*, the game features the beta engine, not the finished version.



**PREY**
**Released:** 2006
**Systems:** 360, PC
Human Head Studios and 3D Realms combined to create Prey using a modified *DOOM 3* engine. Released in July 2006, it sold over a million units in its first six months. Development started in 1995, and it occupied three different game engines before the developer eventually finalised the game on the *Doom 3* engine. The resulting game is a misunderstood masterpiece.

**COMPUTER GAMES DON'T HAVE TO BE LIKE ARCADE GAMES. THE CONCEPT OF LIMITED NUMBERS OF TRIES DOESN'T APPLY TO DOOM**

# DOOM ON THE BIG SCREEN



While gamers were experiencing *Doom* for the first time, id was being swamped with offers from the film industry. The rights to make a *DOOM* movie were acquired by both Universal and Columbia Pictures. However, delays and a lack of progress saw the rights expire and return to id. The rights were sold to Warner Bros but agreements couldn't be met as to the shape of the movie, so they eventually found their way back to Columbia who started work on the movie in 2004.

Andrzej Bartkowiak took up directorial duties and id Software itself, along with John Wells, acted as executive producer.

John Wells wanted a first-person perspective movie saying, "In some ways, it makes cinematic history in that, for the first time, the audience becomes the hero of the film. When we go into FPS, the audience is doing the rampage, the audience is doing the work and that is so cool. It's insane."

Starring The Rock, *DOOM* grossed $15.3 million in its first weekend. John Carmack comments: "I intentionally kept myself away from all production aspects of the movie, because I didn't want to butt in where I had no particular skills to contribute, and I wanted to see the end product with fresh eyes. I would have settled for 'not miserable,' but I actually enjoyed the movie a lot. It obviously isn't an Oscar candidate, but I thought there were some clever bits to it, and the action was basically non-stop."

Despite a mixed reception, the movie did better than average. The DVD release saw gamers looking for references to the game, and there are plenty. One that id would never admit to, is when the chauvinistic Duke gets killed by the imps, there is a definite inference to another gaming character in there who happened to upset id back in the early days.



shotgun and blowing the beast to gory chunks. "Don't interrupt me while I'm speaking," he said, then finished his speech. At the end, the screen went black with blood, only to be replaced with the familiar Microsoft phrase, "Who do you want to execute today?"

The most-talked-about operating system of all time was illustrated by the most famous man in the world of computers standing inside *DOOM* – Jay realised that *DOOM II* was going to be a very easy sell.

*DOOM II* was announced in May 1994. The original team were joined by American Magee, who fleshed out John Romero's ideas while designing his own levels. The extra time allowed John Romero to build even bigger maps, while helping *DOOM* engine licensees realise their game ambitions.

Released in October 1994, *DOOM II* was more of the same. Using the same engine with slightly cleaner visuals, the game was bolstered by new weapons, eight new enemy types and over 30 levels plus two levels ported from *Wolfenstein 3D*. id abandoned the incredibly successful shareware model that had served it so well the year before, and chose instead to sign a lucrative publishing deal with GT Interactive, therefore creating a direct-to-retail route for *DOOM II*. Co-op play was enabled via the internet and deathmatches could now sustain four players at one time. It sold over 500,000 copies at launch. id Software had started to change the way people played games and expectations were huge for a third.

next game would leave *DOOM* for dead, a meeting was called with GT Interactive to highlight a future for *DOOM*. By this point, other developers had caught up with the *DOOM* engine and *DOOM* was beginning to look less impressive with each new release. However, GT wanted more *DOOM*, while id wanted to make *Quake*. As a side note to this, John Carmack deliberately left holes in the protection of the *DOOM* engine for the hacking community, which allowed players to make their own maps. In its infancy during *DOOM*, by the time *DOOM II* was released this had flourished into a massive community for hackers and fans alike. Maps were freely passed around the internet and made both releases feel fresh, but of more note was the community's ability to change the WAD files. This meant that gamers could populate *DOOM*'s game world with anything that they wanted to, from *Happy Days* to *Star Wars*. Think of any famous character and they probably appear in a *DOOM* WAD. George Lucas became aware of the *Star Wars* WADs and instructed LucasArts to make the *Dark Forces* games – *DOOM* was affecting all that came across it.

id agreed a middle ground with GT Interactive that would see the release of *The Ultimate DOOM* in 1995. This release contained everything that had been released in the series before plus one extra episode, 'Thy Flesh Consumed'. id had expanded rapidly off the back of *DOOM*'s success and the original team only contributed two levels to this new offering. John Carmack, who, by now, was working on a new engine,

> [THE SHOTGUN] WAS PROBABLY THE GREATEST ADDITION TO THE ENTIRE GENRE AND KEPT DOOM II FROM BEING REGARDED AS JUST A FOOTNOTE

*DOOM II: Hell On Earth* was the simplest game id ever made. The gamers couldn't wait, there was a route straight to market for the game, and it was a straight sequel delivered with aplomb from the darling of the games industry, who was itself enjoying a rare moment of comfort and stability. John Romero sums the game up nicely: "I even believe that keeping the double-barrelled shotgun for *DOOM II* was a great idea because it kept it from only being a set of new levels and monsters – that new weapon was probably the greatest addition to the entire genre and kept *DOOM II* from being just a footnote or regarded as just an add-on." *DOOM* had brought id the freedom to develop on its own terms, but GT Interactive had other ideas.

So, when John Carmack told an eager games conference in 1994 that id was moving on and that its



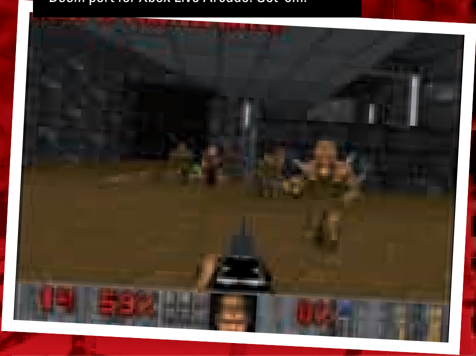
*Doom* was recently released on Xbox Live Arcade. It's a stunning port that features a superb multiplayer mode.

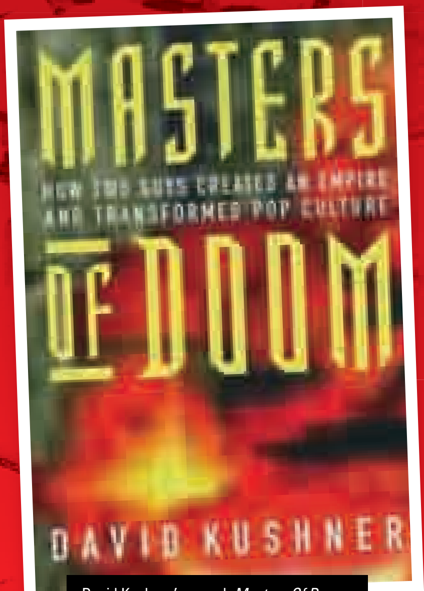
was unimpressed. "*Ultimate DOOM* involved a lot of recycling," he says. Tim Willits was brought in from the *DOOM* community and the release would contain newly developed levels, while some of the best community maps would also be integrated into the new episode.

At the start of 1996 *Final DOOM* was released, this time it was programmed not by id but by Team TNT. Funded by GT Interactive, the game was a release aimed squarely at the *DOOM* hardcore. "We had even less to do with *Final DOOM* than with *Ultimate DOOM*," states John Carmack. The game was viewed very much as a cynical cash-in by GT Interactive. Containing two modded versions of *DOOM II*, the game had little appeal outside the *DOOM* community and that's where *DOOM* signed off for the Nineties. Many conversions would follow, but it wasn't until 1998 and *DOOM 64* that the magic exploded onto a console.

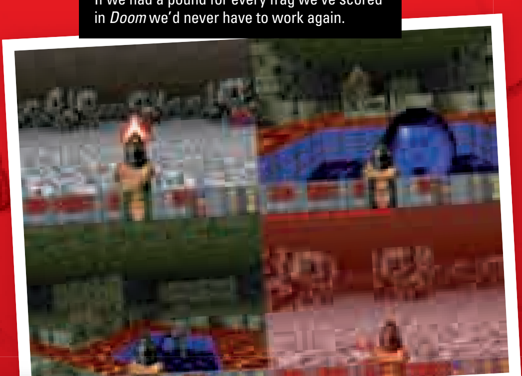
id moved onto a new engine and a new series of games, but *DOOM* had become part of the id heritage and the *DOOM* community kept on growing. Fans continued to find more and more in the game. id may have moved on but the gamers hadn't. In 1997, John Carmack released the source from the *DOOM* engine. Now the modding community moved into overdrive, porting *DOOM* to all sorts of formats that hadn't received a conversion and reclaiming *DOOM* on systems that had received lacklustre conversions.

Little was heard from id about *DOOM* in the following years, until a surprise announcement at Macworld in 2001, where John Carmack told the audience that a new *DOOM* engine had been in development for some time


Another shot of Nerve Software's excellent *Doom* port for Xbox Live Arcade. Get 'em.



David Kushner's superb *Masters Of Doom* tells the full story of id's masterpiece.


If we had a pound for every frag we've scored in *Doom* we'd never have to work again.


It's amazing how fancy new graphics can make old *Doom* stalwarts look fresh and new.

# DOOM ON THE MOVE

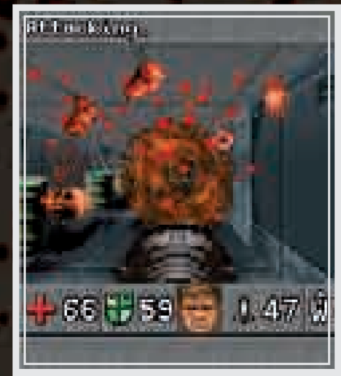
For a series that has constantly been home to reinvention, it came as little surprise when a *DOOM* RPG was announced back in 2004. What was surprising, however, was the format on which it would launc: mobile phones.

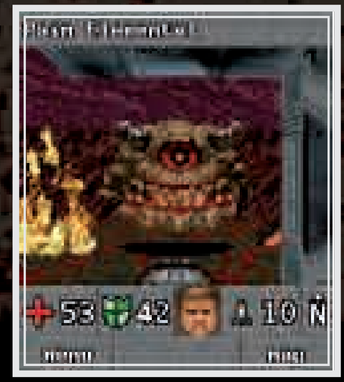
"Getting into this was really a sort of random event. A year ago, I rarely carried a cell phone, and it was just an old black and white clunker," explains John Carmack. "When my wife gave me a new mid-range phone with a decent colour display and some bad game demos on it, I had my curiosity piqued a little about the platform. It turned out to be really easy to develop Java applications for the phone, so I played around a little bit and started thinking about what elements would make a good game for the platform."

The technology led John Carmack to refine his game idea and eventually create *DOOM RPG*. "I wrote a proof-of-concept demo of the basic rendering and play style, and then turned it over to Fountainhead Entertainment to develop into a full game. I did some additional programming work when we started on the BREW version, and I acted as the producer for the project."

Released to coincide with the *DOOM* movie, *DOOM RPG* featured elements from *DOOM* and *Wolfenstein* wrapped up in a turn-based RPG that closely resembles *DOOM 3*. Set in the future, many references are made to id past and present, and *DOOM* is cited as a 'one-hundred-year-old-anniversary release'. Like its forebears, *DOOM RPG* required top-end technology. Only the most modern phones could run it, despite this the game went on to set sales records for mobile phone games and has garnered a massive following since.

The shorter development time for *DOOM RPG* revitalised John Carmack. "I have been harping on about the evolutionary benefits you get with short development cycles, and our second mobile game will be a clear example of this. It is a traditional fantasy-themed RPG built off the experience gained with *Doom RPG*, and it is just better in every way. Doing two evolutionary cycles in less than a year is a huge win." Whether a full-blown *DOOM RPG* will ever come to fruition remains to be seen.





and that id Software was planning to release a much anticipated *DOOM 3* in 2003.

*DOOM 3* wasn't an easy journey though, as both Adrian Carmack and Kevin Cloud (two of id's owners at the time) were fiercely opposed to the remake. "They thought that id was going back to the same old formulas and properties too often," remembers John Carmack. Not for the first time, it was the creation of a *Wolfenstein* game that would lead to the inception of *DOOM*. *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* was a runaway success and Game Of The Year in 2001. John Carmack evidenced his argument with this fact and gathered enough internal support to confront the other owners with an 'Allow us to remake *DOOM* or fire us' ultimatum. A standoff ensued that would see graphic artist Phil Steed fired by Adrian Carmack. Facing an internal revolt and an id Software without John Carmack, Adrian and Kevin gave in and the creation of *DOOM 3* began.

*DOOM 3* was to feature the most revolutionary game engine the world had ever seen, a team of 20 people grafted from 10am to 10pm Monday to Saturday with no holidays, for over two years, to realise the ambition of *DOOM 3*. Touted as a re-imagining of the original, it followed the *DOOM* Bible much more closely than *DOOM* had managed.

Storyboarded and written by Matthew Costello (ironically the writer of *The 7th Guest*), the game would move *DOOM* from fast-paced frenetic action into survival horror territory. The music was originally to be handled by Bob Prince, but when John Carmack and Bob couldn't reach an agreement on how to integrate the music, Bob was replaced by Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, who himself would be replaced for personal reasons by the then drummer of Nine Inch Nails, Chris Vrenna. After a drawn-out development cycle, the game achieved Gold status in July 2004. 15 minutes after achieving this status, lead designer Tim Willits announced to the world: "Oh yeah, we're thrilled. To be truly honest, *DOOM 3* is even better than we thought it was going to be when we first started. We have 20 super-talented, highly motivated people that put everything they could into this title. We're very proud of this child that we're sending off into the world." When pushed on the *DOOM 3* experience before the game's release, id's CEO, Todd Hollenshead, made a statement that would make *DOOM 3* unmissable for established 'DOOMsters' the world over. "There are two different aspects to the fear element of the game. There's the overwhelmingly creepy suspense-dread feeling and then there's the shock moments of something jumping out at you or something unexpected happening. To me there's a general uneasiness where you feel like you should get your diapers and then there's the others where you just ruin the seat of your pants."

*DOOM 3* was every bit the monster its predecessors had been. Needing a hardware upgrade to run on many computers, it arrived into a crowded marketplace, rubbing shoulders with *Half-Life 2* and *Halo 2*, two games that wouldn't have existed had it not been for the original. Not surprisingly, it was a massive success. Awards were showered on the game, but gamers were divided on the merits of the new *DOOM*. Four-player deathmatch may have been present, but for an audience that had experienced the delights of *Quake 3 Arena* it felt light, while others bemoaned the lack of co-operative play options.

Containing all the elements and creatures from *DOOM* plus some new weapons wasn't enough for some gamers. *DOOM 3*, like a Clive Barker novel, proved just too frightening for some, while others missed the adrenaline rush of the original. Since its release, however, true to all of id Software's best videogames, *DOOM 3* has sold more copies year on year as gamers come to terms with the experience. The communities and the love are growing at phenomenal rates. In 2005 an expansion pack called *DOOM 3: Resurrection Of Evil* was released, which tied up all the original's loose ends. This also went on to win many accolades as well as a massive audience.

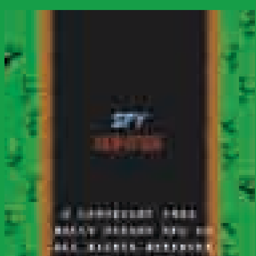
Even today *DOOM* is still being visited and experienced by new gamers, with the most recent version being made available on Microsoft's premier Xbox Live Arcade service. John Carmack may not be quite ready to unleash a new version of id's franchise any time soon, but you can be sure that when he does, the world will be waiting for it.

THE CLASSIC GAME

# SPY HUNTER

It's time to tear up the roads with bonnet-mounted machine guns and erratic driving. Stuart Hunt rolls up his suit's sleeves, slicks back his hair and barrel rolls across the cab of Midway's spy classic

## IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** BALLY MIDWAY
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **GENRE:** RACING
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40+ (PCB BOARD)





» You should really try and avoid shooting at the innocent, oh well.



» The trucks will drop you off and then race to the nearest greasy spoon.

**No videogame has captured the silliness of Eighties culture better than *Spy Hunter*. It emits that cheesy aura of bygone Saturday afternoon TV shows like *Knight Rider*, *Airwolf* and *Street Hawk*. In these worlds, the heroes are always depicted as boyish playboys, whose dysfunctional relationships with machines exist within action-packed universes, where something will dramatically flip in the air or blow up every ten seconds.**

While the game is supposedly inspired by Ian Fleming's super-spy James Bond, we always felt that *Spy Hunter* played out more like *Knight Rider*, but with its story set solely on the tarmac. Void of scenes of the Hoff offering a compassionate ear to the pretty young daughter of a bullied car-mechanic-cum-retired-Daytona-champ, *Spy Hunter* removed all that unnecessary 'will they, won't they' waffle and concentrated simply on delivering frenzied driving action.

Playing the role of a rough-and-rugged super spy, you are plonked behind the wheel of a fictional white Interceptor sports car and sent out to administer justice on an extremely wide motorway by blowing enemy spy cars into smouldering bits and pieces.

It isn't made entirely clear why you're destroying cars that look like the Batmobile. You're a spy, your car looks cooler and more angelic than the other vehicles on the road and it fires bullets. If you're looking for a plot, forget about it.

The game is a point chaser that's very difficult to master. Negotiating snaking roads that look like they were very badly project managed means that controlling your car in top gear demands lightning reflexes and infallible patience. While hitting the roof of your speedometer might rake in the points faster, it also makes your car as vulnerable as a snowman on a sunbed. So it's helpful then that the game gives you an infinite number of lives for a short while, to help you become acclimatised to its frenetic gameplay and its many controls.

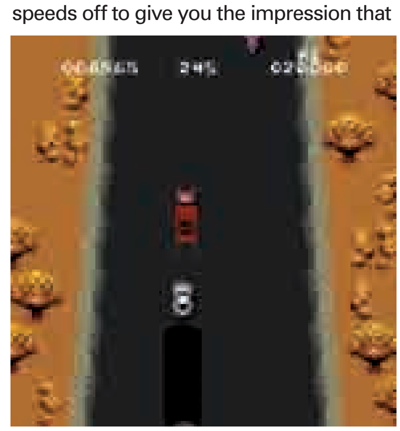
Nowadays, even arcade games about counting to ten are adorned with switches, instruments, buttons and hydraulics. But back in 1982, gamers were used to steering their bleeping sprites with a rollerball or a joystick and protecting them with a few chunky fire buttons.

However, *Spy Hunter*'s cabinet looked markedly alien when it first arrived in the arcades. It sported a futuristic steering wheel with two tiny fire buttons positioned where your thumbs rested, a chrome accelerator pedal and a clunky gear stick boasting two speeds. Its panels and stickers were plastered with decorative stats, graphs, read-outs and useless diagrams to make you feel that you were perched inside a futuristic super car. It would be fair to say that much of the game's 'spy feel' was bolstered by its ultra-cool casing. Throw *Spy Hunter* into a generic cab and, sadly, it loses some of its edginess, but that doesn't make the experience any less enjoyable.

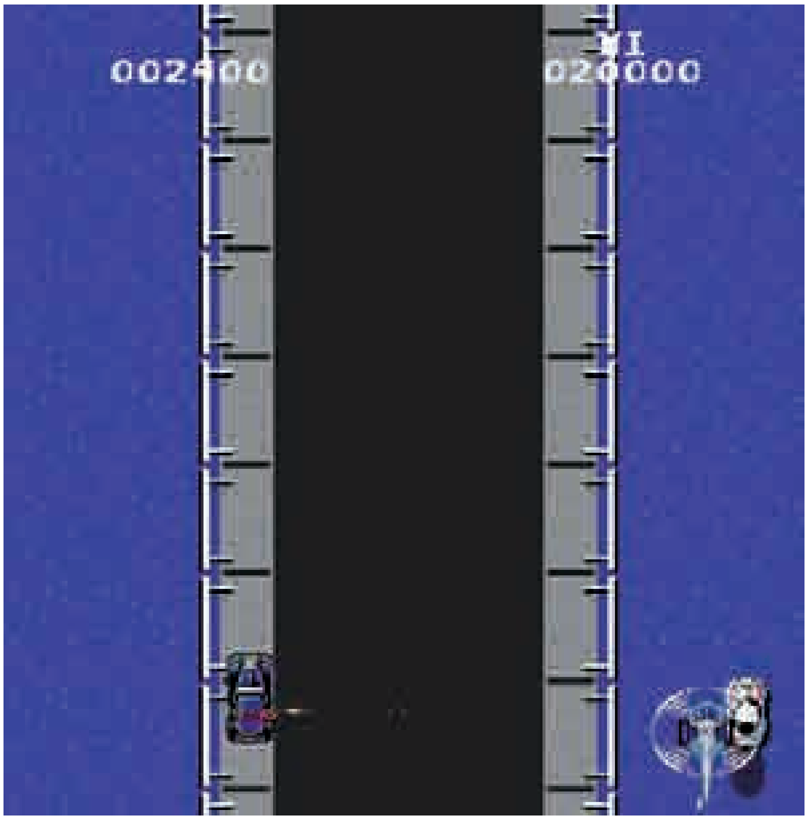
You begin the game by being deposited out of the arse of a truck, which quickly speeds off to give you the impression that



» Careful not to drive into that cycle lane, your car won't like it very much.



» If your car starts doing this in real life, it might be advisable to take it to a garage.




» If you want to mess with the game's head, as soon as you're dropped off by a truck drive to the side of the screen. You won't earn any points mind, but you do get to drive on water.

the mission you are about to embark on might be on the precarious side.

While the enemies and innocent pedestrian vehicles that scan down the screen offer their fare share of headaches, it's the devious wheel-slashing switchblades that advance from the bottom of the screen that really test your driving mettle. One shunt from their bumper is enough to send your car spiralling into the Game Over screen.

Handily, the trucks make frequent re-appearances and drop their ramps to allow you to hop inside, take a breather from the chaos and get kitted out with a handy power-up. Taken straight from the book of stereotypical spy gadgets, stopping enemies in their tracks using oil slicks and smoke screens turned the balance of fairness in your favour, but it also added another action that your brain would need to process.

The game was a race for survival against an enemy capable of attacking you from every possible angle, even the air. Getting reasonably far into the game triggered the arrival of the annoying helicopter foe, The Mad Bomber, who would quickly turn the road into an army testing site and make driving on it a billion times more treacherous.

If you could get a handle on all that the game threw at you, then you might have been lucky enough to experience the game's fabled water section. By smashing through the boat houses that appeared infrequently on the grassy verges your car would transform into a fire-breathing speedboat, with the action taking to the water and the enemy cars switched for barrel-dropping boats.

While very early versions of the game's code are reputed to have blasted out to the *James Bond* theme, Midway was unable to eventually secure the rights to the music and as a result it was forced to change the theme to a digital rendition of the music from the American cop show *Peter Gunn*. Although a blow initially, this would actually prove to be a blessing in disguise, as it would hand *Spy Hunter* an annoyingly distinctive musical flare gun against the bleep-and-squeak backdrop of arcade dens.

*Spy Hunter* was completely mad, but was it any sillier than the shows it was trying to pastiche? Watching the A-Team break out of prison using a hot-air balloon fashioned out of bin bags and hairdryers, now that's the type of lunacy that never leaves you.

## "YOU'RE A SPY, YOUR CAR LOOKS COOLER AND MORE ANGELIC THAN THE OTHER VEHICLES ON THE ROAD AND IT FIRES BULLETS"




» Another typically generic arcade screenshot.



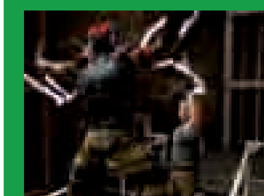

» Supercharged to super-charred in just a few seconds.

## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**MORTAL KOMBAT**
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, SNES, MEGA DRIVE, MASTER SYSTEM... LOADS!
YEAR: 1992

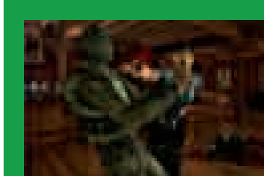
**READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING**
SYSTEMS: DREAMCAST, N64, PLAYSTATION
YEAR: 1999

**PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY** (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: XBOX, PS2, PC
YEAR: 2004



## A ROCKY ROAD

It was announced that a film adaptation of *Spy Hunter* was in the works back in 2003, after the rights were scooped by Universal. It was thought that Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson would be in the driving seat and that John Woo would be directing. Dwayne warmed up for the role in Midway's PS2 title *Spy Hunter: Nowhere To Run*, which was released last year. It's believed that the game was due to coincide with the release of the movie, but when the film's development hit a brick wall the game was shipped alone. The project is still believed to be on the cards, with *Alien Vs. Predator* and *Resident Evil* director PW Anderson behind the camera barking cues and steering the licence in questionable directions.



THE MAKING OF...

# RESCUE ON FRACTALUS!

To commemorate this year's 25th anniversary of Lucasfilm Games (now LucasArts), original Games Group members David Fox, Charlie Kellner, Peter Langston and Gary Winnick reveal the fascinating history of their famous fractal debut. Mike Bevan ventures behind Jaggi lines to tell the story





## IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** ATARI-LUCASFILM/EPYX

» **DEVELOPER:** LUCASFILM GAMES

» **RELEASED:** 1984 (5200), 1985 (ATARI 800 & OTHERS)

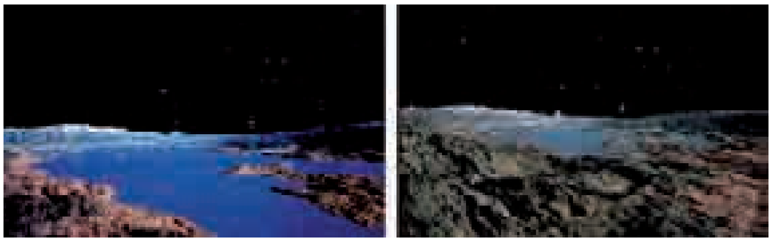
» **GENRE:** RESCUE-'EM-UP

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10




**A long time ago, in an unassuming office far, far away, two Lucasfilm employees were engaged in a deeply engrossing conversation. It was September 1982, and the location was the company's computer graphics research department based in Marin County, California.** Newly hired Games Group designer David Fox had found himself temporarily sharing a work space with Loren Carpenter of Lucasfilm's computer graphics division. Loren, a graphics expert, had been largely responsible for creating the 'Genesis Effect' visuals seen in the then-recent *Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan*. This remarkable computer-generated sequence was provided for Paramount's movie by ILM (Industrial Light & Magic). The ground-breaking piece featured a dramatic orbital sweep of a planet surface in flux, its geographic features morphing before the viewer's eyes. The driving force behind this effect was a fractal algorithm implemented by Loren. This gave the amazingly naturalistic 'feel' of blossoming seas, valleys and mountain ranges, and the technique was so striking it was reprised in a further two *Star Trek* films.

On one of David's first few days at the company he'd been brainstorming ideas with Loren when the topic of the *Star Trek* effect had come up. "I asked Loren if he thought there was any chance that fractally generated mountains could be done on a microcomputer," remembers David. "He thought about it for a few minutes, and said he thought it might be possible. I think he came back the next day and had clear ideas of how to do it." Although not directly involved with the Games Group, his discussion with David inspired Loren, who loved a challenge, to pursue some 'extra-curricular' research. "He borrowed an Atari 800 from us, took it home, and in a few days had taught himself 6502 assembly language, how the Atari handled graphics, and came back with a functioning demo," recalls David. Loren had achieved a real-time fractal-generated mountain range within the confines of the Atari's primitive resolution and 48K of memory. It was a revelatory moment for the newly formed Games Group team. David (later project leader on *Fractalus!*) remembers gathering around a small monitor with Games Group manager Peter Langston to view Loren's work. "We were blown away," David says. "It was running at



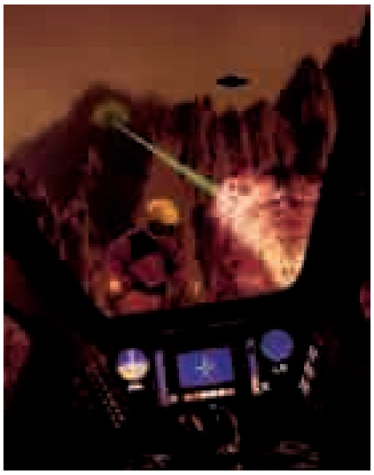
» The 'Genesis Effect' sequence from *Star Trek II*, with the fractal mountains that inspired *Rescue On Fractalus!* © Paramount Pictures.




» The 'launch-tube' effect when the Valkyrie blasts into space was inspired by the launch sequence from *Battlestar Galactica*.




» The transition downwards to the planet's surface was David's homage to the opening of *Star Wars: Episode IV*.



» Detail from the game's cover, with David Fox in full flight-gear awaiting rescue, and a hostile Jaggi saucer in the background.

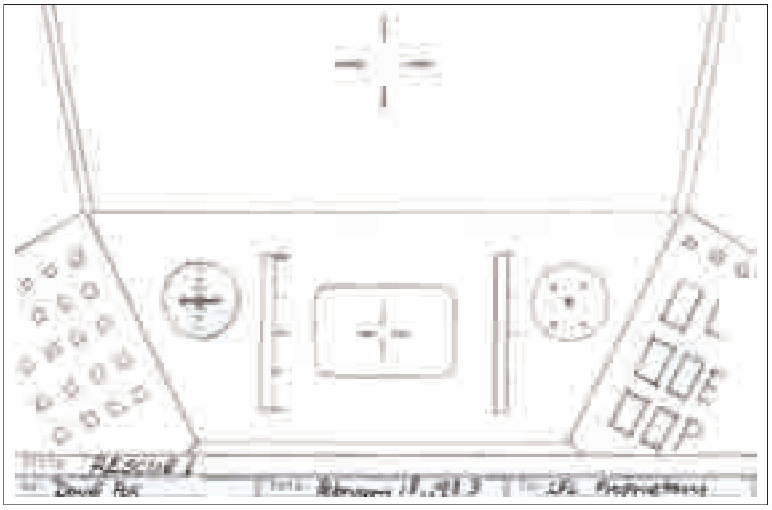
about 8-10 frames per second, and was one of the coolest things we had ever seen on a microcomputer."

Based on the success of the demo David started putting together a 'white paper' on his ideas for how Loren's fractal landscape could be utilised in a videogame. A *Star Wars* fan before working at Lucasfilm, he was keen to produce an immersive experience worthy of standing up to scrutiny alongside George Lucas's epic blockbusters. "Seeing *Star Wars* was a transforming experience for me. I wanted to get inside that universe," says David. With the tentative title '*Rebel Rescue*', David's concept was a flight-simulator-styled first-person-perspective game where the player operated a "high-speed X-Wing-like craft" locating downed pilots on a hostile mountainous planet. Ironically, as the rights to use *Star Wars* characters in home and arcade videogames had been awarded to Parker Brothers and Atari in a hugely profitable deal, it didn't make financial sense for Lucasfilm to use its movie licences for in-house products, so the Games Group could only use original concepts at the time. "I know we can't use *Star Wars* characters, but can we use *Star Wars* places, vehicles, weapons?" David speculated in his pitch. "Any similarities between this game and the rescue scene on the ice planet Hoth are purely coincidental," he added humorously.

Away from Marin, 1982 hadn't been a year of smooth sailing for the videogame industry. Atari had lost millions of dollars with its poor 2600 *Pac-Man* conversion, and its famously appalling *ET* licence. Lucasfilm's Games Group had been set up with $1 million of funding from Atari, in the hope that the company's involvement might inspire the games market in the same manner it had done with cinema, and with the agreement that Atari had right of first refusal on all products. There were high expectations all round. The Games Group members were inexperienced, however, and wanted time to hone their programming and design skills. "When we started work on the games, we were calling them an experiment, one that we could use to get our feet wet and test our ability to create games," David reveals. "We called them 'throwaways', meaning that if we weren't happy with the results we'd chuck them, and not show them to Atari or anyone else, and then start on the 'keeper games', which we would show to Atari." This translated into a fairly relaxed atmosphere for the team. "We had no deadlines, so we had some space to screw up," he laughs.

David, as project leader and lead designer, was responsible for many aspects of development. One important role was designing the cockpit environment and instrumentation. "I spent a lot of time working on the HUD," he recalls. "For inspiration, I went back to *Star Wars*, wanting the feel of the

» David's original sketch for the Valkyrie's cockpit is near identical to the final version, and was inspired by an X-Wing cockpit.



## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**BALLBLAZER**
SYSTEMS: ATARI 5200/800/7800, C64, APPLE II & OTHERS
YEAR: 1983

**THE EIDOLON** (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ATARI 5200/800, C64, APPLE II & OTHERS
YEAR: 1985

**THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND**
SYSTEM: PC, AMIGA, ATARI ST, MAC
YEAR: 1990



## INDUSTRIAL FLIGHT AND MAGIC



» (Left to Right) Gary Winnick, Charlie Kellner, David Levine, Peter Langston, Noah Falstein and Loren Carpenter.



» (Left to right) Charlie, Loren and Peter, as featured in the Atari 5200 manual, with ILM's model of the Valkyrie.

Lucasfilm's famed ILM was heavily involved with designing promotional material and packaging for *Rescue On Fractalus!*, and it also helped to produce models of the Valkyrie fighter, its cockpit and the alien saucer seen in the game. It even allowed the development team to feature in a photoshoot for the game's manual, which help gave the cover art a wonderfully atmospheric feel. "When we first heard that ILM was going to be doing all the images for the manual we were all really excited," says David. "And when they allowed me to be the pilot on the front and back cover, getting photographed by the same geniuses that filmed *Star Wars*, wow." The pilot's helmets worn by David and the team were actually motorcycle helmets modified for the shoot by ILM. "The helmet was spray-painted beige, and covered with parts from a model kit of a tank. It was pretty uncomfortable, but the experience was a lot of fun," he reminisces. "Even more fun than the time that I got to be one of the screaming voices of dying bad guys for *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*." And who ever said that making videogames was boring?

THE MAKING OF...

# RESCUE ON FRACTALUS!

## LONG ROAD TO RELEASE..

In autumn 1983 demos of *Rescue On Fractalus!* and *Ballblazer* were sent to Atari's marketing department for evaluation. Unfortunately, unprotected floppies were used, and the two games soon appeared on bulletin boards across the US. No one at Atari ever owned up to the leak, but it was a blow for the Lucasfilm team. "We went from being ecstatic about the games to extremely depressed," says David. "We comforted ourselves by saying that these weren't the final games, but in reality, they were close enough that most people who played them probably wouldn't have seen the difference." Copies of the game with the titles '*Rescue Mission*' and '*Behind Jaggi Lines*' come from these pirated beta versions. Another setback was the long delay between the end of development and the actual release. After the takeover of Atari by Jack Tramiel, the licensing deal between the two companies collapsed and only the Atari 5200 version was ever released by the Atari-Lucasfilm partnership. It would be 1985 before the home computer versions were released, at which point the Atari's popularity had waned. Luckily, conversions for machines like the C64 and Apple II still sold fairly well.



» The C64 version of *Rescue On Fractalus!* was released by Activision here in the UK. That's David again, on the back cover, in ILM's cockpit mock-up.

## FRACTAL FACTUALS

Loren Carpenter's fractal engine was a radical and unique solution to the problem of creating the real-time 3D landscape in *Rescue On Fractalus!*. Fractals are irregular geometric shapes composed of indefinitely repeating patterns, occurring in nature in such forms as snowflakes, coastlines and, indeed, mountain ranges. If you zoom out on a coastline, for example, you'll see the same repeated jagged complexity as you would at a much more localised scale. The fractal geometry used in the game gives the landscape a very realistic appearance with computer-generated valleys and peaks created similarly to those of a real mountain range.

instrument panel of an X-Wing. I figured if I could see the 'real thing', I'd get to see all sorts of extra details and have even more inspiration. So I set up a tour for myself of the storage area where old props were kept. I got to see an actual X-Wing cockpit." He also managed to sneak in a further *Star Wars* reference in the game's launch sequence. "Entering the atmosphere of Fractalus was definitely a homage to the first scene in *Episode IV*, when we pan down and see Tatooine below," he reveals.

"After a few months, when we could actually fly around with a joystick and pick up pilots we knew it was a very cool game," continues David. "But we were still close to it, so we brought in other people to show it to. As far as I can remember, everyone seemed to love it, and we began to indulge in dreams of having a big hit."

Charlie Kellner was originally brought in by David to code the game's flight dynamics and to optimise the fractal engine. "I was the fourth or fifth person to be invited to join the Lucasfilm Games Group, depending on whether you count Loren as part of it," he recalls. "The idea was already pretty well established, but the hardest parts of the 6502 code had yet to be written. My forte was my familiarity with high-speed drawing, math and audio on the 6502. I started with the micro code math routines that would let Loren's fractal mountains run at a reasonable speed. I also did some of the audio driver and low-level system control code, and finally wound up doing the high-speed 2D-animation drivers." However, Charlie is keen to stress the true team spirit in those pioneering early days at Lucasfilm. "Since there were no reference books to look in, we were all helping each other solve the problems the best we could," he says.

During this period Peter was busy hiring staff for the Games Group, and was also involved in the second of Lucasfilm's two titles in development, David Levine's *Ballblazer*. However, he still found time to help the *Fractalus!* team, composing the introductory music and designing some of the atmospheric sound effects. "When we were looking for a sound to use for the ship's hangar doors opening, something clicked for me and I went home and recorded my girlfriend's electric can opener opening a can of peas," says Peter. "When I played it back for David and Charlie without telling them what it was, they looked at me and said "hangar doors.""



» Loren Carpenter's fractal mountains perfectly captured the feel of a hostile alien world, and are still remarkably effective.

The game's working title had now become '*Behind Jaggi Lines*', an in joke by the team on the non-anti-aliased graphics, most noticeably the uneven, jagged 'struts' of the ship's cockpit.

An added bonus for the team was getting to work with George Lucas, albeit only briefly. "George met with us only once, and that was after the games were fairly far into development," remembers David. "I demonstrated *Rescue On Fractalus!* to him, then handed him the joystick. He flew around for a few seconds, tried pushing the red fire button, and when nothing happened asked, 'Where's the fire button?' I was basically trying to create a non-violent game and didn't like the idea of shoot-'em-ups. The only way to destroy one of the enemy ships was to lure them into the side of a mountain through tricky flight manoeuvring." A weapon system was duly added, along with enemy gun emplacements on the mountain tops and suicidal alien UFOs. "The other thing George suggested was that maybe sometimes the pilot running towards the ship might actually be an alien in disguise. He wanted to know if it could jump up in front of you. We thought that was a great idea and Gary Winnick created the 'Jaggi' monster for us, Charlie got it to animate fast enough so the effect worked, and Peter created the scary sound when it popped up."

**"HE FLEW AROUND FOR A FEW SECONDS, TRIED PUSHING THE RED FIRE BUTTON, AND WHEN NOTHING HAPPENED ASKED, 'WHERE'S THE FIRE BUTTON?'"** DAVID ON GEORGE LUCAS'S FIRST REACTION TO THE GAME

Gary remembers the creation of the Jaggi monster well, as it was his first commissioned task for the Games Group. "The group was looking to add an artist to the team," he explains. "David wanted an instance where the enemy aliens could disguise themselves

» The Jaggi gun turrets lurking on the mountain tops were added towards the end of development.





» Land the Valkyrie to rescue a pilot and he'll come running and knock on your rear airlock door. Don't forget to open it.


» Woops… Accidentally turning your ship's shields back on when a pilot approaches is a big no-no in *Fractalus!*.

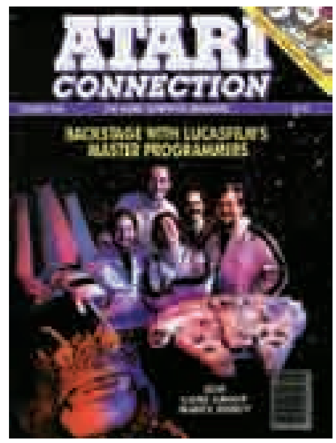
as downed pilots as a surprise attack while you were parked on the ground. I worked on it for about a week, after which I drove up to Marin County with my completed animation on a five-and-a-quarter-inch floppy disk to deliver the files. I guess they must have been happy with the results, because they offered me a full-time position as the division's first artist/animator soon after that." The team decided that the existence of the Jaggi monster should be deliberately kept a secret to surprise players. "We convinced Atari not to tell anyone that the alien was in the game," says David. "It didn't appear in their press material, and was only hinted at in the manual. During the first few levels of gameplay, the monster never showed up. So, by the time it happened for the first time, players were generally pretty complacent about playing the game."

All this subterfuge led to some rather amusing anecdotes from David. "I still get emails from people recalling their first experience with the Jaggi monster," he chuckles. "People have fallen off chairs, let out an involuntary scream that brought college dorm-mates running to see if they were okay, and kids have run out of the room crying to their mothers (I don't feel too good about that one). Often they were just too freaked out to play the game again for an hour or so. Many people remember the game just because of this, and that it was the only game that ever truly scared them."

"PEOPLE HAVE FALLEN OFF CHAIRS, LET OUT SCREAMS, AND KIDS HAVE RUN CRYING TO THEIR MOTHERS" DAVID ON THE JAGGI MONSTER'S EFFECT

Looking back on the *Fractalus!* project Charlie has no doubts about his personal highlight. "I'd have to say the fractal engine," he admits. "I learned a lot from Loren, including at least six fundamental ways of approaching 3D graphics that I'm sure I would never have thought of by myself. I was able to use those ideas to develop engines for several more games at Lucasfilm, and the knowledge has served me well ever since." Charlie's revised graphics engines would also be used for the excellent 'second-generation' fractal titles *Koronis Rift*, and *The Eidolon*, on which he was the project leader. "It was an honour to be working with such great talents, and a strong start for a career in the game industry," he remembers.

"I actually got to redo the game to some degree in 1991 while working on a location-based entertainment project (Mirage) at Lucasfilm," reveals David. "It was a joint venture with Hughes Simulation, and we got to implement it using state-of-the-art image generators used in flight simulators. It was a blast. I could stay in there for hours flying around, shooting things." Respect then, to George and his 'missing' fire button.



» The Games Group sporting spiffy LFL jackets for a 1984 US Atari magazine cover.

**Special Thanks to** everyone from the Lucasfilm Games Group who contributed to this article, especially David Fox, who also provided many of the images. For further information see his website, which includes exclusive video footage from the game's launch: www.ElectricEggplant.com/rescue.html

» Many Jaggi died to bring you this feature.



» "The weird symbols on the Jaggi monster's shirt are the team's initials if you turn the image sideways," reveals David.


# CHIKI CHIKI BOYS

'WE ARE THE CHIKI BOYS'



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



## HISTORY

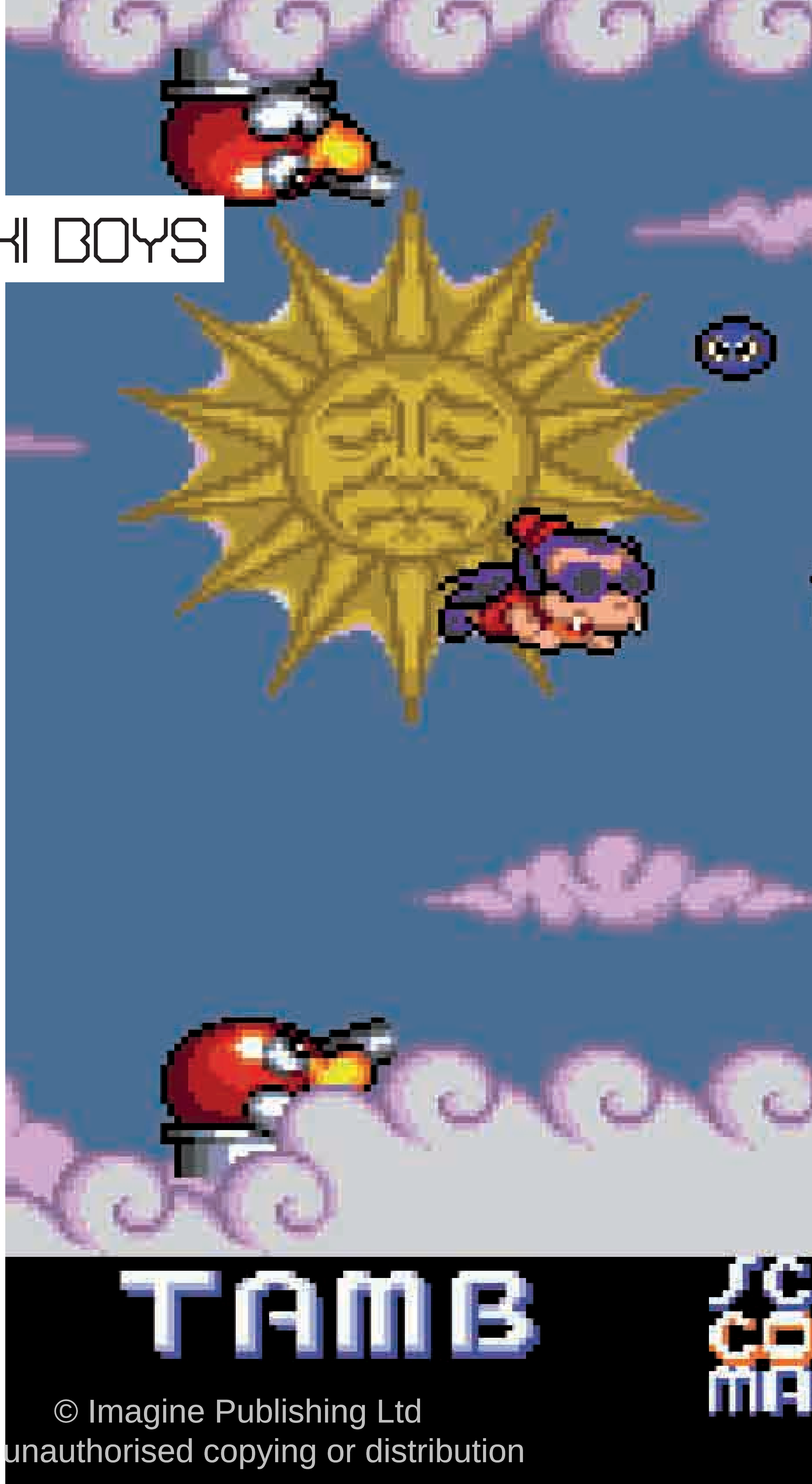
**Instead of renaming the Mega Drive port of *Mega Twins, Chiki Chiki Boys,* Capcom should have switched it to '*Chunky Chunky Boys*'.** These twins are possibly two of the beefiest-looking protagonists ever seen in a platformer. Apparently, when they go out with their pal Mega Man, the blue-pant wearer gets frequently mistaken for a helmet-wearing greyhound.

The game was shamefully missed by many on its release; although its peculiar box art, which shows a skirt-wearing boy leapfrogging off a cloud in front of a crying dragon, probably played a large part in *Chiki Chiki Boys* not reaching the wider audience that it deserved. But weird box art, with crying dragons, was the type of thing that I lapped up as a kid, and I seem to remember purchasing it for that very peculiar reason.

With a familiar air of Sega's *Wonderboy, Chiki Chiki Boys* weren't the most inspired platforming duo to ever appear on the system. With levels based on the elements earth, wind and water, beaten enemies exploding into coins and stubborn end-of-level bosses never knowing when to quit, it's as generic a platformer as you're ever likely to come across. But for me, running and jumping over all that old ground was actually quite enjoying.

As it's an early Japanese platformer, the whole game (as you might expect) is stark raving bonkers. Taking to the clouds with a baseball cap that's a bird, battling a stingray while wearing a goofy set of snorkels, and hacking the stuffing out of seed-spewing gherkin men meant that what *Chiki Chiki Boys* lacked in originality, it certainly made up for with its quirkiness.

With the ability to use the cash you earned in the game to upgrade weapons, purchase magic and buy a much needed extra life (you only get two measly lives), it fused subtle RPG elements with enjoyable arcade action. And when I look back, I was a happy, happy boy after taking a risk on this Chiki little number.




ORE 1780
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CONVERSION CAPERS

# GREEN BERET

ONE MAN WITH A RUSTY BAYONET AND A FLOPPY GREEN HAT BATTLED AGAINST THE ODDS IN THE ARCADES, AND ONE COMPANY TOOK ON THE TASK OF CONVERTING THE GAME TO HOME COMPUTERS. ANDREW FISHER LOOKS AT HOW IMAGINE CONVERTED THE KONAMI COIN-OP GREEN BERET



**Ocean signed a package deal with Konami in 1986, gaining the rights to *Hyper Sports, Mikie, Yie Ar Kung Fu, Ping Pong, Comic Bakery* – and *Green Beret*. After the commercial failure of Imagine, it had become a label within Ocean famous for its arcade conversions.**

The people bringing *Green Beret* to life on 8-bit machines included programmers David Collier and Jonathan 'Joffa' Smith, along with musician Martin Galway. "We always had a machine to work from," recalls David about the colossal task ahead of them. "We also used to video-tape the games for graphical reference. Konami did not assist us at all, they just said yes or no to the final product." Joffa adds, "Whenever *big* projects came to Ocean/Imagine, then me and Dave Collier got the pick of the crop. I had the arcade machine there to lean on while writing it. I played it all the way through and videoed it to get the feel, landscapes and so on. I can still play it all the way through, even today, without losing a life."

One aspect of the conversion that immediately strikes the team when we ask them about it, is how little time they were actually given. "I remember David Collier, who had just come off a long crunch on *Rambo*, walking in and saying, 'I've just talked to Jon Woods about this new Konami game, *Green Beret*, and we've committed to do it in 6 weeks,'" recalls Joffa. David remembers the monumental task that was ahead of them, "When we first saw the game we didn't know how we were going to fit it all in." He also highlights one particular problem of just playing the game through. "If we didn't actually notice a feature in a coin-op game due to not playing it enough, we didn't put it in the C64 version. When I was at Ocean, we only ever got one example of each coin-op game in the building, and never worked from manuals or 'graph-paper drawings' of the graphics or anything of that kind you might get from the manufacturer." Fortunately, the team did notice the tiny plane that kills a player who stays in one spot.



» The aim of the game, simply explained by the arcade version.

The Cold War was not only the inspiration for *Green Beret*'s scenario, but also the genesis of a truly terrible pun. *Rush'n Attack* (Russian attack? Get it?) was the name chosen for the American release, but in Europe and the rest of the world the alternative title of *Green Beret* was used. That led to extra work for the programmers and graphic artists working on the conversion. "The game seemed pretty violent in nature (for the time), and it was even more inflammatory when we realised that the PAL version had simple red blocks on the air base jets, but the NTSC version had hammer and sickle logos," continues Martin. "The Americans must have really hated the Russians back then, to want to put coins into a game to invade a Russian base."

On the Spectrum, David Thorpe provided the loading screen based on Bob Wakelin's artwork, but the rest of the graphics, sound and code were down to Joffa. "All of the memory is taken up. And I mean *all* of it," he states. "There was no room for anything special, every single byte has been used. Given more time I could have compressed things more, I think. No music, no high scores, nothing. Every byte is taken. The 'control options menu' only appeared once after the program had loaded. It had to reside in a 'buffer' that became overwritten once the game had been started." As for moving the graphics, there was one drawback. "The baddie soldier graphics had to share generic 'masks' in order to save some precious memory. (A 'mask' is a cut-out shape used to create a hole in the background image into which a graphic is drawn.) This stops the background from showing through the graphic," says Joffa. The original arcade machine came with two buttons – one to stab, and one to use extra weapons picked up from enemy commanders. Pressing up would make the hero jump, automatically grabbing on to ladders. This meant a key had to be pressed to launch the extra weapons. "The joystick and keyboard routines were stock items," reveals David. "Once you had done the first game you could just reuse the code." The Spectrum does feature an option to redefine the keys, but it is only available once, when the game has finished loading; to change the settings the game has to be reloaded from scratch. "Most ZX Spectrum game players were used to using the keyboard to play games, rather than using a joystick and hitting the 'space bar' for action," continues Joffa.

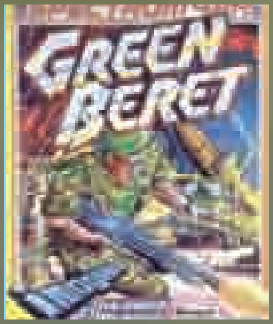

» Keith Wilson's Amstrad version earned an Amstrad Action Rave.


» The 'Turquoise Beret' charges into battle, attacking a very cold guard, in the Atari 8-bit version.

## IN THE KNOW




» **PUBLISHER:** IMAGINE
» **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **GENRE:** RUN-'N-GUN

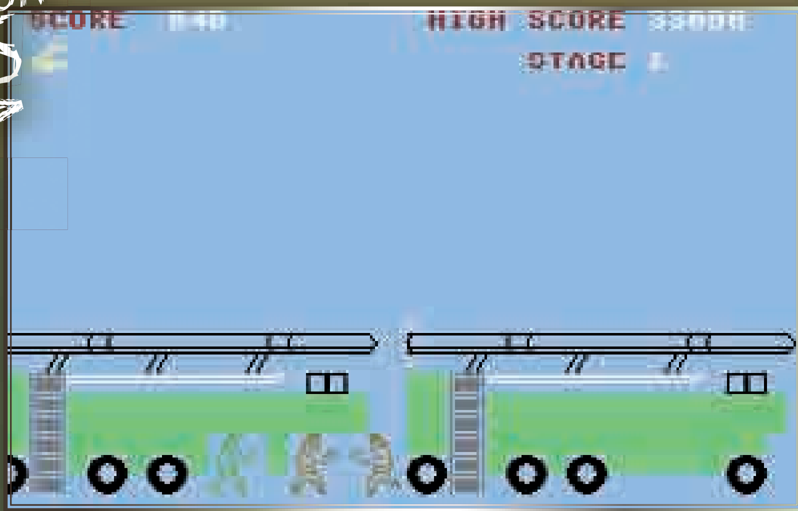



"IT WAS AROUND THAT TIME WHEN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY DISCOVERED THERE WAS MONEY TO BE HAD FROM THESE NEW-FANGLED VIDEOGAMES"
DAVID COLLIER

# CONVERSION CAPERS

### HARDWARE

Ocean's conversions were done on an early development system. "We used a cartridge-based assembler to start with, from a company in Manchester," explains David. "Then we (Mike Webb and I) wrote a 6502 assembler on a piece of hardware that eventually got replaced by the PC. A team of us converted the assembly code to work on the C128, then eventually on to the Atari ST. We wrote our own assemblers for Z80, 8080 and 68000. Eventually the assembler was assembling itself. Tony (Pomfret) and Bill (Barna) worked on this as well." Joffa recalls, "I used the early Ocean Z80 dev kit – a 'Tatung Einstein' for coding linked to a 48K rubber-keyed Spectrum. Nice setup. Painless. Martin Galway was using my setup to do the Spectrum '*Cobra*' tune when all the power to the building went off and he lost all of it – he had to redo it all!"




» The Commodore 16 version, in all its blue-skied glory.



» Who let the dogs out? The enemy did. (C64)



» Joffa Smith's rather good Spectrum version.

One thing that the conversions did miss out was the theme from *The Great Escape*, which played as a high score was entered. Ocean just didn't want to pay out extra money, as David recalls. "I think it may have been a licensing issue," he begins. "It was around that time when the music industry discovered there was money to be had from these new-fangled videogames." Martin created a version of the tune, but it was never heard until many years later when it was recovered from his source disks as part of the '*Project Galway*' CD. David is complimentary about Martin's music and Steve Wahid's graphics for the Commodore 64 version. "They both did an excellent job in the amount of space I actually gave them."

When it came to creating the music, Martin reveals, "Each coin-op game had a 'test mode' where arcade owners could test the CRTs, or play sounds to make sure the loudspeaker worked at the volume you needed it to. I noticed that over time, as each new coin-op game became more and more complex, the test mode became more and more detailed – allowing you to play any sound effect or tune from the game without having to reach the part of the game it was featured in. This was really useful for someone like me, of course. I would typically transfer sounds from games using test mode to a cassette deck, and continually rewind and play the tapes forward to hear the audio elements over and over."

The Commodore 64 had two memorable original pieces by Martin. The loading tune was inspired by Jean-Michel Jarre's *Night In Shanghai*. "The track brought to my mind the price of war that civilians pay after the wars are over. Loss of loved ones, longing for a life that once was, all that sorrowful stuff. I also had a growing desire to convey more 'fictional depth' in games – and taking *Green Beret*'s East versus West, Cold War setting seriously, I wanted to move beyond the cerebral limitations of the clichéd, bippety-boppety music normally composed to keep players entertained for short periods of time in arcades."

As for the title tune, Martin says, "While the composition was original, I was cheating to save time by stringing together a few well-worn compositional mechanisms I'd developed in previous games." The *Zzap!64* review called it 'Galway on 45', referring to the Stars on 45/Starsound compilations of popular tunes that were in the charts. "I totally agreed with them at the time, I was not too happy with the quantity of new ideas and/or styles that I was able to conjure up for that tune. I was under a time crunch and got the main tunes from the game done pretty quickly, they may have taken two or three days total. The original tunes took longer. I'd say four or five weeks for the whole game." What was it like, working at Ocean back then? "Ocean really felt like a production line at that time, we were getting through each game in a short time. It was taking longer and




» Jerky scrolling is just one of a number of problems on the MSX version.



» The Xbox Live Arcade version features achievements and online multiplayer.

"HERE'S ME STRUGGLING TO FIT AN ARCADE MACHINE INTO 48K AND MAGAZINE REVIEWERS ARE SHOUTING THE ODDS" JONATHAN 'JOFFA' SMITH



» The rescued captives salute you, now do it all over again.

longer to complete each game though, and three months was probably the norm by about 1986. The office was a bit cramped and dungeon-like, and the workers frequently consoled themselves by hitting the pub. It was a fun apprenticeship."

Playtesting was down to the programmers and a small, dedicated team. "I used to enjoy playing arcade games because I used to fix the hardware in them," recalls David. "So writing my own games was a dream come true. Getting a good feel from the game was most important to me and if the screen jerked or flickered I used to hate that; I *still* do. We had a couple of testers that would video record their games, so if there was a break up or bug I could easily reproduce the issue and implement a fix."

Flickering was also a problem on the C64 conversion. "We used sprite multiplexing and full-colour scrolling on that game, with a neat trick with sprite latching. You can, as most people in the know will tell you, change the 'Y' coordinate of the sprite once it has started to be displayed (when the vertical scan position equals the sprite 'Y' coordinate). This allows you to make a sprite appear on screen as long as you want. You just have to update the character pointer before the sprite 'X' position is reached. We used to do this with the vertical interrupt of the sprite multiplexer. Those glitches were caused when the sprites did not get updated soon enough; this happens when there are more than three sprites on the same line and with the same vertical coordinates."




» The parachutists drop bombs as they descend, then attack with a flying kick once on the ground.

But with all those tight deadlines, surely it must have been tough going cramming Konami's game into humbler 8-bit machines. "We did make deadlines, we were usually within a couple of weeks," reveals David. "A conversion would take up to three months depending on its complexity."

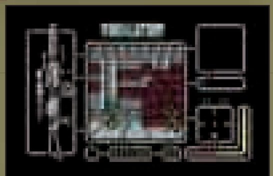
Joffa agrees, "It took about three months to write. And it just gets snatched away from you because of the expensive advertisements in the mags. It has to be in the shops at a certain date or money is lost. There's an 'auto stab' bug in the game that got through the testing because it had to be in the shops the day after mastering. Another week and it would have been sorted out." Would he have changed anything, in hindsight? "I guess so. People seem to like it, even today. I would have liked to improve the animation on the main character but there just wasn't the time."

*Green Beret* picked up good reviews, including a *Zzap!64* Sizzler. The aptly named *Konami Coin-Op Hits* compilation released the following year gathered together *Green Beret*, *Yie Ar Kung Fu*, *Ping Pong* and *Hyper Sports*. There was also a bestselling NES conversion of *Rush'n Attack*, created in Japan by Konami, which made its way back to the arcades in the 'PlayChoice' machine. However, the Spectrum version came in for criticism. Joffa points out, "It was the fact that it didn't have a tune or hi-score table or menu that did it. Here's me struggling to fit an arcade machine into 48K and magazine reviewers are shouting the odds." The MSX version was badly received – it was not developed in-house at Ocean, it went past the deadline and Konami Japan was very disappointed with the outcome.

The Imagine label gradually disappeared from the public eye as Ocean gained its own reputation and published conversions under its own name. *Rush'n Attack* appeared on Konami's *Arcade Advanced* for GBA, on the DS it appeared on the *Arcade Classics* collection that has just launched in Europe, and on Xbox Live Arcade. Martin rounds off by saying, "I recently impressed my colleagues by getting all the way to the end of the Xbox Live Trial game in my first try, after they'd shown some difficulty with it – I guess I still had it in me."

**SECOND BLOOD**

There was no official arcade sequel to *Green Beret*, although *M.I.A.: Missing In Action* by Konami played in a similar style. Ocean did go on to develop its own sequel for 8-bit computers called *The Vindicator!*, advertised with the subtitle '*Green Beret 2*.' *The Vindicator!* was split into three sections. The first task was to escape from the alien outpost, shown from a 3D perspective. The player had to collect lift passes to move between levels and find the bomb parts to blow the base up. There were also anagrams to unscramble, based on the names of Ocean employees at the time. The next part saw the player in a plane, bombing buildings and picking up extra fuel, to clear a path for the jeep (armed with machine guns and limited grenades). The last level was set in the alien catacombs, where the final enemy was faced on foot.



» Fighting a big green alien on the first level of *The Vindicator!*. (C64)




» Bob Wakelin's excellent artwork was a common feature of Ocean games at the time.




» It's certainly colourful, but we're less than impressed with this ropey Amstrad conversion.



» *Rush'n Attack* is one of six games on Konami's *Arcade Advanced* on the GBA.

"THE OFFICE WAS A BIT CRAMPED AND DUNGEON-LIKE, AND THE WORKERS FREQUENTLY CONSOLED THEMSELVES BY HITTING THE PUB!"
MARTIN GALWAY

# CONVERSION CAPERS

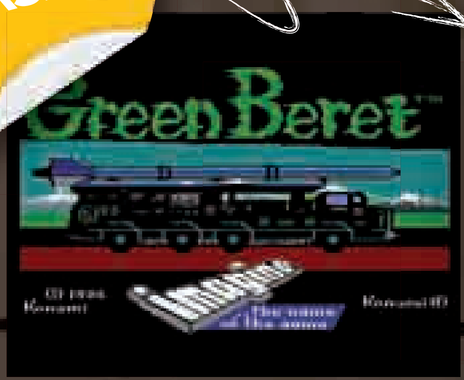


Hey there,
Retro Gamers, Green Beret here.
So far we've looked at the genesis of porting my side-scrolling stab-'em-up to the humble home computers and consoles of the mid-Eighties, but I bet you're wondering what happened when I finally completed my tour of duty, racked up enough points and got my ticket home? Let's be honest, the army didn't really look after me at all; a pithy butter knife against an army of armed Soviets, rabid dogs and karate experts! Okay, so the blade had *Another World* tazer properties that was rather cool, but would it have hurt them to at least give me a jacket to protect me from the harsh bitterness of the Russian weather?
Well, to be honest, I never really recovered from the nightmares and atrocities that I witnessed during that horrendous war (I still have bad dreams about it today and often wake up in a cold powdery sweat). Subsequently, most of my home conversions would prove to be little more than clunky games of cold-war syndrome. In fact I don't really like to talk about it. It supplants terrible images back into my jellied skull and I fear that they're going to get so bad that I'll never be able to live a normal life. So, I'll let my shrink, Stuart Hunt, take over from me and explain about some of the conversions I've starred in and just what it is that makes me look so damn powdery.

## OTHER VERSIONS TO CONSIDER

GREEN BERET (C16)
GREEN BERET (BBC MICRO)
GREEN BERET (XBOX 360: XBOX LIVE)
GREEN BERET (GBA & NDS

## THE GREEN BERET CONVERSIONS




### CPC 464

The CPC was never going to replicate arcade graphics, but that's no excuse for replacing Green Beret with Robin Hood and having him stab characters from Charles Dickens' imagination. The CPC port has gameplay that makes you want to smash your monitor. The game's levels, strangely, appear to be four times the length they should be, and its dubious collision detection will fall in to your thoughts every time you walk off the screen and wait for its lazy scrolling to catch up with you. To best describe its gameplay, imagine yourself walking a dog with no legs across a bridge, while being continually mugged by Russians.






### ZX SPECTRUM

Despite the fact that the generic Russian soldiers really look like fur-coat wearing aliens, the Speccy port remains pretty faithful. It has better scrolling than the CPC version and feels more fluid. Handily, it's inhabited by a lot of lazy enemies who'd rather walk off the screen than a climb ladder to catch you, and that makes its difficulty slightly more forgiving. In fact, the only thing that drags the game down is the annoying karate-kicking Soviets. They appear at the *end* of the first stage of the arcade game, but in the Speccy port they appear at the beginning. As they're tricky little blighters to dispatch of, this can make the game rather frustrating, rather early. Overall, this is a very good effort.






## C64

Graphically, this is videogame cubism at its finest and if Picasso was a C64 coder, this would be his *Le Guitariste*. The lazy generic enemies form exactly the same sprite compound as Green Beret, with the exception that they're blue and have black pinstripes down the side of their trousers to make them look like traffic cops. The gameplay is fluid enough and doesn't suffer from those strange, collision-detection interfering scrolling periods that the CPC does. To give credit where credit's due, despite the blocky visuals the C64 port does feel a lot more reminiscent of the arcade game than its 8-bit computer counterparts. A very solid conversion.






## NES

Now this is more like it. Not only does it come with a great co-op mode, but it also manages to capture the look of the arcade game perfectly. The first thing you notice is the new intro, which drops the 'hostage-freeing' plot for a 'destroy the enemy's secret weapon' one. We don't mind this, because it means we get a cool new action-packed intro showing your Green Berets, who are oddly blue and red, parachute into battle. Controversial as it sounds, in some ways the NES version improves on the arcade original: its collision detecting feels less fidgety and the action less smothering. This is the best version by a country mile.






## MSX

This version is so bad that it's actually not funny. It takes all the bad elements of every port and meshes it in to some kind of strange, sluggish Jelly Babies-looking platform game. Your character walks like he's doing the moonwalk (but in the proactive direction) and he doesn't even have a knife graphic. In fact, the only 'good' aspect we could muster up about this port is the fact that your character's attack looks a little bit like he's trying to shake the hands of his Soviet enemies. So when they turn into flashing skeletons, it kind of looks as if he's attacking them with one of those practical joke hand buzzers. Which would be a great game in itself.






## BBC

The BBC version is actually not a bad little port, but it's certainly not without its flaws. The first thing that hits you, after the neon colours, is the return of those screen-screaming CPC scrolling sections. However, where the Beeb version feels less clunky than Arnolds, the stabbing at its pace can almost be forgiven. What's so impressive about this version is its fluidity. Everything on the screen moves with gusto, which makes it quite enjoyable to play. Also, the main sprite, sporting bright red fatigues and lime-green boots, kind of looks like one of those chaps from *Smash TV*, which is nice.






**Year released:** 1986 (US), 1987 (UK and Japan)

**Original price:** £99 (Core Pack)

**Buy it now for:** £15+

**Associated magazines:** Mean Machines, Computer+Video Games

**Why the Master System was great:** With a far brighter colour pallette than Nintendo's NES and some superb arcade conversions, the Master System proved to be a cracking purchase if you were a die-hard Sega fan

RETROINSPECTION

# MASTER SYSTEM

SEGA MAY NOT COMPETE IN THE HOME-CONSOLE ARENA ANY MORE, BUT ITS MASTER SYSTEM ARGUABLY PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN INTRODUCING MANY GAMERS TO THE CONCEPT OF THE 'HOME ARCADE'. DAMIEN MCFERRAN TAKES A FURTIVE LOOK AT ONE OF SEGA'S FIRST FORAYS INTO THE DOMESTIC HARDWARE MARKET

**The Sega Master System is something of an enigma. One of the most powerful home consoles of its time, the machine is barely worthy of a footnote when it comes to deconstructing the history of the American and Japanese gaming industries.** It sank almost without trace in these two key territories, failing to make even a dent in the seemingly impregnable armour of Nintendo's NES (or Famicom). However, in other parts of the world – most notably Europe and South America – it was a tremendous success, winning hordes of fans and establishing Sega's reputation as a first-rate purveyor of arcade smash hits in the process.

Founded in 1940, Sega (an abbreviation of 'SErvice GAmes') initially gained renown for its unique brand of automated coin-operated arcade games. Having plenty of experience in the field of amusements, the company was perfectly poised to compete when 'true' arcade titles like *Pong* and *Space Invaders* started to appear. Thanks to games like *Future Spy* and *Zaxxon*, Sega soon garnered a reputation as something of an expert when it came to arcade thrills and spills.

As the Eighties began to unfold, the videogame industry seemed unstoppable. Encouraged by the sterling performance of its coin-op division, and the sheer amount of money American company Atari seemed to be making from the VCS/2600, Sega decided to enter the home entertainment arena. Released in 1983, the SG-1000 was Sega's first attempt at cracking the console market. However, it was not the triumph the company had hoped for. To make matters significantly worse Atari managed to successfully flush the US home videogame market down the toilet in the same year, causing the first worldwide videogame crash. Sega's assets were hit badly in the ensuing fallout, but salvation came from American David Rosen (who had previous ties with Sega) and Japanese businessman Hayao Nakayama. These two men stopped the firm from collapsing into the gaping hole created by Atari's poor management.

After a period of stabilisation, Sega was purchased in 1984 by Japanese corporation CSK and subtly re-christened 'Sega Enterprises'. Despite the abject failure of the SG-1000, plans were made for a successor in the shape of the updated SG-1000 'Mark II'. Sega, like fellow Japanese company Nintendo, knew that although the




### INSTANT EXPERT

**A clone of** the SG-1000 Mark I was produced by Telegames that could also play ColecoVision software.

**The Master System** possessed a pair of 3D Glasses that simulated depth of vision by using a shutter system on the right and left lenses.

**The Power Base** converter allows you to play Master System games on a Mega Drive console, although it acts only as a 'pass through' device, as all the necessary hardware to run Master System software is already included inside the 16-bit machine.

**The first SG-1000** did make it out of Japan, albeit in small quantities. It was distributed in Italy and Spain, as well as a few other countries.

**The Japan-only** computer SG-3000 is actually a SG-1000 Mark II with a built-in keyboard. A keyboard could be added to the SG-1000 to bring it in to line with the SG-3000.

**Tec Toy released** several games in Brazil, like *Street Fighter II* and *Dynamite Headdy*, long after the Master System had ceased to be a force elsewhere in the world.

**The Brazil-only** Master System Compact uses a wireless RF signal to connect to the television. A pink version was also released called the Master System Girl.

**The final commercial** Japanese release for the Master System/Mark III was 1989's *Bomber Raid*.

**Built-in software** was often a feature of Master System hardware, with games such as *Hang On*, *Alex Kidd In Miracle World*, *Sonic The Hedgehog* and the famous 'hidden maze game' (turn on the machine without a cartridge in the slot and press up and both buttons at the same time) all being included inside different variants of the console.

**Sega first used** Opa-Opa from *Fantasy Zone* as its mascot, but Alex Kidd was soon drafted in as a replacement. Kidd was popular – there was even a Japanese board game based on his exploits – but he too would be dropped in favour of a certain blue hedgehog.

# MASTER SYSTEM




» Some early titles were released in both cartridge and card forms, with the latter usually being sold at a budget price. As games became bigger the card format was eventually dropped due to insufficient memory.



» The SG-1000 and SG-1000 Mark II – the Japanese forefathers of the Master System.

crash of 1983 had damaged confidence in the videogame industry, it had created a void that simply begged to be filled – in Japan at least. The Mark II struggled to shift units at retail, but this hardware would eventually evolve into 1985's SG-1000 'Mark III' – bar a few technical differences this was the Master System in all but name.

It was around this time that Sega's rivalry with Nintendo – which would later bloom into a full-scale war when the Mega Drive and SNES arrived on the scene – became apparent. Sega's machine was more powerful than Nintendo's, but when the Mark III and Famicom went head-to-head in Japan the former was given a rather humiliating beating by the latter. Nintendo's popular console trounced Sega's technically superior hardware thanks to a wealth of third-party support. Developers were infamously forced to agree that they would not publish their NES titles on rival hardware, which left Sega in a rather tight predicament – it could only rely on its own home-grown arcade titles for so long. The solution was to obtain the rights to 're-program' the games of other developers (a process that PC-Engine creator NEC also indulged in, ironically converting many of Sega's key arcade hits to its own 8-bit format), but even this strategy wasn't perfect – many of the licensed titles were distinctly lacklustre compared to the 'cream of the crop' that the NES enjoyed.

Undeterred by the underwhelming performance of the Mark III on home soil, Sega decided to release the hardware in the US, where it was radically re-styled and rebranded as the impressive-sounding 'Master System'. Released in 1986 (a year after Nintendo performed the same trick with the Famicom, which became the big loveable slab of grey plastic known as the NES), the Master System found itself in a similar predicament to the one experienced in Japan. Nintendo had spent the previous year busily promoting its new console and had snapped up key developer support from Capcom, Konami and Taito. Again, Nintendo requested that developers keep their games 'NES exclusive', and given the unassailable position the console enjoyed, few had the will to defy this request. Despite possessing technically superior hardware, Sega had, unfortunately, come to the party too late, with the Master System also crippled by a meagre software library. Compared to the multitude of third-party developers that supported the NES, Sega was only able to call upon the allegiance of two in the US: Activision and Parker Brothers.

By 1988, Sega's Japanese overlords had decided that enough was enough. Keen to offload the under-performing console, the questionable decision was made to sell the US distribution rights to toy firm Tonka. While the company was the indisputable king of the bright yellow plastic digger, it, sadly, had no experience whatsoever of effectively selling a cutting-edge electronic entertainment system. Tonka immediately made some puzzling choices regarding software choices and vetoed the localisation of several key titles (many of which were selling like hot cakes elsewhere in the world). Compared to the stunning collection of software available on the NES, the result was something of a foregone conclusion. Despite Tonka taking over the distribution duties, the Master System continued to perform poorly and was all but ignored by American gamers.

A rather pointless Japanese release of the Master System hardware followed in 1987, with the console being treated with the same level of disdain as its predecessor – unsurprising when you consider it was effectively the same machine that had been released to general apathy in 1985. It was eventually discontinued in Japan two years later. Any other company would have capitulated in the face of such a dismal performance, but Sega wasn't about to give up without a fight. Carefully scanning the globe for possible conquest, the stubby finger of fate fell on Europe – the one region where Nintendo's influence had yet to be felt. Nintendo had released the NES in Europe towards the end of 1986, but poor promotion coupled with a lofty price point meant that the market penetration enjoyed by the machine was decidedly unimpressive. Sega saw the opportunity and pounced.

Ably distributed by UK company Mastertronic (previously famous for releasing budget games for the 8-bit home micros), the European variant of the Master System was unleashed in time for Christmas 1987. Spurred on by adverts that promoted the console as 'an arcade in the home', and supported by a range of killer coin-op

> "ANY OTHER COMPANY WOULD HAVE CAPITULATED IN THE FACE OF SUCH A DISMAL PERFORMANCE, BUT SEGA WASN'T ABOUT TO GIVE UP WITHOUT A FIGHT"

**Bundle of Joy**

If you thought the current confusion over Xbox 360 and PS3 bundles was a new occurrence in the console industry, think again. Back in the late-Eighties, the Master System was produced in three different packs: the 'Base' System (think '360 Core' and you're on the right track), the 'Plus' system (which added the all-important Light Phaser) and the 'Super' System (which was the same as the 'Plus', but also added the short-lived 3D Glasses). Although the existence of these different bundles undoubtedly resulted in several youngsters feeling inadequate when they got the 'Base' unit for Christmas, the peripherals that were included with the more expensive packs were not convincingly supported. The Light Phaser only enjoyed a handful of games and the 3D Glasses were dropped altogether when the Master System II hit the market – the lack of a card slot meant the remodelled console could not support the unique add-on.




## OTHER VERSIONS – WHEN ONE MACHINE ISN'T ENOUGH...

### SG-1000 Mark III

Only released in Japan, this was the precursor to the Master System and is almost technically identical, although the FM sound chip in the Master System was an optional extra with the Mark III. Because it faced off against Nintendo's Famicom in Japan, it didn't sell particularly well and was swiftly dropped when the Mega Drive hit the market.



### Master System (Mk I)

The 'classic' machine. The attractive casing features a slot for card-style games and also allows you to use the 3D Glasses. Although it's possibly the most well-known design in fan circles, it's actually harder to track one of these down in the wild than you'd imagine; because of this, second-hand prices are on the rise.



### Master System II

A revision that allowed Sega to manufacture the machine more cheaply, the Master System II lacks the card slot that the original machine had. The design isn't fantastic but it's a lot smaller than its predecessor. This is probably the most common variant of the console in the West and can be found with ease at most car-boot sales.



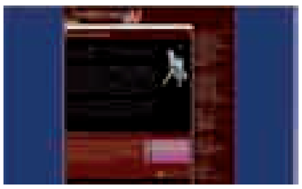
### Game Gear

Released to compete with the Game Boy, it was essentially a portable Master System. Many of the games were ports of home titles and the machine was even able to play Master System carts thanks to the 'Master Gear' converter. The Game Gear was battery hungry and suffered from a blurry screen – two factors that resulted in its downfall.

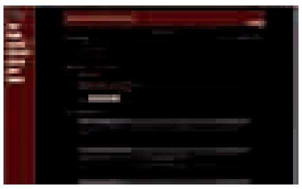


## COMMUNITY – SEGA WEBSITES TO WATCH

### Sega 8-bits
**www.smstributes.co.uk/**
One of the best Master System websites, here you'll find heaps of content including reviews, forums, hints on where to purchase a system and even regular competitions. A clean, neat and easy-to-navigate design rounds things off nicely. Highly recommended if you find yourself bitten by the Master System bug.



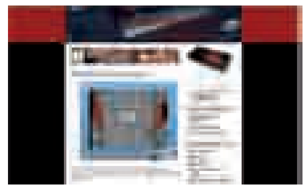
### Master System Museum
**http://alexkidd.com/**
Although it's not updated particularly often, this is an excellent site for information and features a design that compliments that of the original Mk I console. It's also packed with loads of reviews and represents a handy one-stop resource for fans of the machine.



### SMS Power
**www.smspower.org/**
The home of a group of Master System fans dedicated to preserving and documenting the history of their beloved system. The site has been around since 1997 and continues to perform valuable work in regards to keeping the memory of the console alive. Check out the excellent scan archive!



### Master System Junkyard
**http://segams.blogspot.com/**
A blog that takes a rather wittier look at Sega's classic console than the other sites here. Within the Junkyard you'll find links to a variety of amusing content, and unlike the vast majority of Master System fan sites out there, this looks to be getting regular updates – which is nice.



classics such as *Hang On*, *OutRun*, *After Burner* and *Space Harrier*, the Master System quickly mopped up the market share Nintendo had been too slovenly to secure. Gamers weaned on the Spectrum and C64 suddenly saw the attraction of owning a home console – rather than playing bumbling, half-arsed conversions of their favourite arcade hits by Western companies only concerned with cashing in on popular titles, fans could indulge in highly accurate ports produced by Sega itself. "The Master System raised the bar in terms of arcade-style home gaming," explains Neil West, former editor of *Sega Power* magazine. "The hardware was a leap forward from the home computer systems we'd all been used to." It was with the Master System that many UK gamers experienced instantaneous loading – an astonishing revelation after years of waiting for tapes to load on the home computers.

Such was the success of the machine that Mastertronic soon found that the Master System was accounting for nearly its entire yearly turnover. Such spectacular performance attracted the attention of Richard Branson's Virgin, who eventually acquired the firm (which was renamed Virgin Mastertronic) and, therefore, the European distribution rights to Sega's hardware and software. It was a timely intervention and a shrewd business move as the Master System's successor was on the horizon and it would prove to be even more successful.

When the Mega Drive/Genesis was released, it spelt the end for the Master System in the US and Japan, despite a remodelled alternative appearing in the shape of the Master System II. Sega reacquired the US distribution rights for its products, from Tonka, and set about promoting the new-look Master System, possibly in the hope that the frenzied public interest in the 16-bit Genesis would somehow trickle down to its 8-bit stable mate. Sadly, it wasn't to be, and the final game to be published in the US was *Sonic The Hedgehog* in 1991. Compare this to Europe, where the Master System II was a big success and helped the format cling on to its significant market share. As the Mega Drive started to gather momentum, Sega Europe wisely kept the 8-bit console ticking over with a drip-feed of quality titles like *Streets Of Rage II*, *Mercs* and *Sonic 2*. Support finally died away in the mid-Nineties.

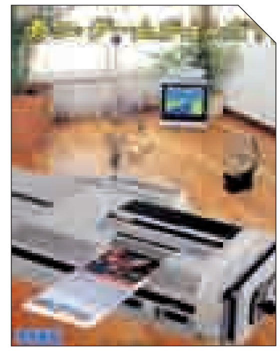
Another market where the Master System enjoyed almost unchallenged success was Brazil. Traditionally a region where console technology trails that of the US, Europe and Japan, the machine was released in 1989, but remained wildly popular well into the following decade, marketed with impressive skill by Tec Toy (see **Retro Gamer** 30 for more info). The company even went as far as to release a wireless variant of the Master System hardware, dubbed 'The Compact'.

When you consider this rather sketchy history, which saw the Master System fail catastrophically in two of the three key worldwide markets, it begs the question: is the console really worthy of a reassessment? The answer is simple. Without this criminally undervalued machine, Sega would not have enjoyed the considerable success it had with the Mega Drive. The Master System allowed Sega to experiment with arcade conversions, original IP and even create a mascot in the form of the loveable monkey-boy Alex Kidd. Without the Master System we also wouldn't have *Phantasy Star* – one of Sega's most well-known and best-loved franchises. Developers like Yuji Naka and Naoto Oshima cut their teeth on Sega's 8-bit hardware. Although it couldn't boast the sheer volume of classic titles possessed by Nintendo's NES, the Master System is still worthy of praise. Those gamers willing to stick with their machines back in the late-Eighties were treated to a commendable selection of games including *Wonderboy III: The Dragon's Trap*, *Psycho Fox*, *Power Strike* (aka *Aleste*), *Golvellius*, *Phantasy Star* and many, many others.

The fact that Sega was so dominant in the coin-op arena also meant that the machine played host to some commendable ports, as Neil West reveals, "The console came at a time when Sega enjoyed huge influence and power in the coin-op world, which meant a lot of games were available for conversion." Although it could be argued that the promise of 'an arcade in the home' wasn't fulfilled until the advent of the Mega Drive, the Master System nevertheless created a solid foundation to build on and gave gamers an insight into the fascinating world of Sega. This was a company that in the proceeding years would scale the heights of the world videogame industry, only to fall from grace in spectacular fashion almost as rapidly. In that respect, the Master System serves as a remarkable historical piece – with this much-maligned console, Sega tentatively tested the waters they would ultimately flounder in.



» Towards the end of its life the Master System played host to some ambitious conversions – some far more successful than others.



» The Mark III came with a dazzling range of peripherals – none of which helped it in the fight against the Famicom.



» US Gold provided admirable support for the European Master System.



» These promotional booklets were bundled with Japanese releases.



» A 'Card Catcher' was needed to play card games on the Japanese SG-1000 Mark II.

# MASTER SYSTEM

# PERFECT TEN GAMES

It was home to the ugliest game cartridges, was cased in the most god-awful package design that you could imagine, but boasted some cracking games nonetheless. Join Retro Gamer as we look back at ten Master System games that you can't possibly be without.



01




02



03




04

## PSYCHO FOX

- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** CRAZY TAXI

01 **It's not the greatest platformer ever made, but it was one of the few Master System titles that became synonymous with the system. And any game about a fox battling a god has to make it on to some kind of list.** Apparently the prequel to the awesomely entitled *Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure* (which later became known as *DecapAttack in the West*), Psycho Fox is a wonderfully vivid platform adventure that's quite a bugger to master. Boasting *Mario*-style warping and the funniest attack in any videogame ever; a punch which looks a little like Psycho Fox is continually getting enamoured and knocking things out with something that resembles a hairy slowworm chewing on an apple. We'll let you guys fill in the blanks.

## ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD

- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** VIRTUA RACING

02 **The coolest videogame character ever was doing the heavy-fringed, shell-suited look long before the words 'our' and 'kid' were annoyingly put together.** Living inside the Master System II, this game would be hailed as the greatest freebie in videogame lore (until Christmas NiGHTS was given away with a magazine), and by default became the console's quintessential platformer. Big-fisted Alex Kidd must traverse imaginative worlds to compete in the Paper, Scissors and Stone World Cup. He's up against competitors that have had intense plastic surgery to make themselves look like a piece of paper, a pair of scissors and a fleshy rock, in the hope it will give them an edge in the competition. Jerks.

## OPERATION WOLF

- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** TAITO
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BUBBLE BOBBLE

03 **Taito was faced with the very difficult decision of which direction to steer this project in. It could either take the veterinary-arcade simulator route with an emphasis on saving wolves, or create a game about one man with a gun taking on a coconut shy of angry soldiers while helping to liberate terrified hostages.** Taito decided to roll with the latter option – the correct decision, we reckon. With the Master System's chunky Light Phaser controlling your shooting and a second pad providing the trigger for your grenade attacks, playing the game while sitting on a tumble dryer – thus replicating the sensation of the arcade cab's recoil – all made for a really great home conversion of this warfare classic. Quite possible the Master System's finest arcade conversion.

## CALIFORNIA GAMES

- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** EPYX
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

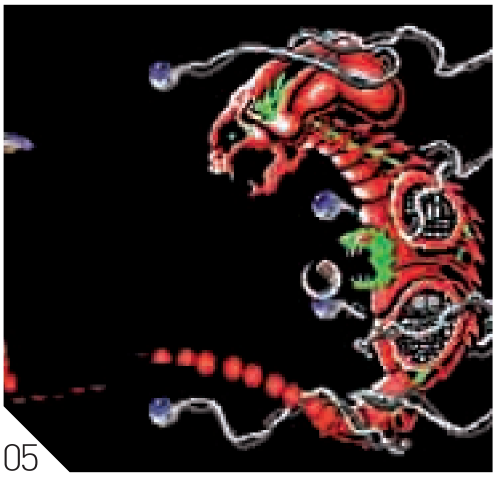
04 **The 8-bit consoles weren't really renowned for their fantastic sporting titles, and the Master System had some of the worst examples on any system.** If anyone has ever been unlucky enough to play any of the machine's 'Great' series of sports titles (*Great Football, Great Soccer*, Great juxtaposition of the word Great) you'll know exactly where we're coming from. And don't even get us started on *Basketball Nightmare*. However, you may well remember the Earth tilting slightly on its axis after the release of Epyx's brilliant *California Games*. While playing through the game's six events had a tendency to make you feel like one of those annoying kids from *Saved By The Bell*, in its own goofy way it offered a nice slice of sun-kissed sporting action, and it looked fantastic to boot.

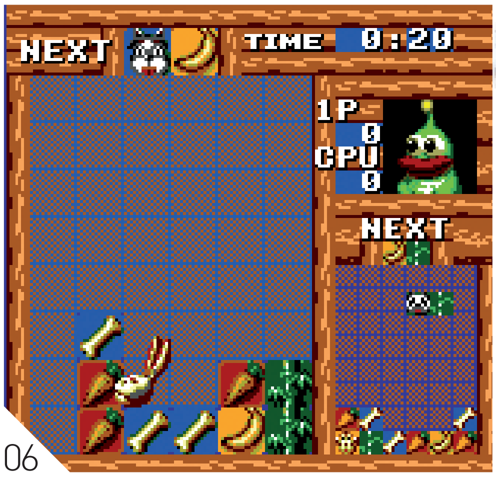
## R-TYPE

- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
- » **CREATED BY:** IREM
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** IN THE HUNT

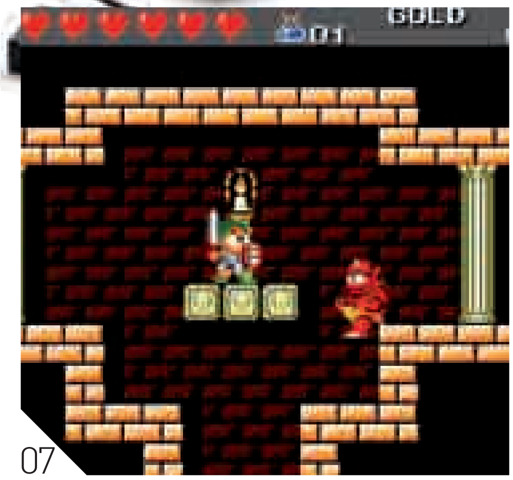
05 **The force is strong in this conversion. Irem's classic side-scrolling blaster is still one of the finest examples of the genre.** Apart from the annoying flickering of the enemy characters, the Master System port offers an incredibly faithful reproduction of the game's stunningly bleak Giger frames and its myriad of bullet-spewing enemies. *R-Type* is teeming with memorable sections, but arguably the most iconic is the encounter with the game's first boss, Dobkeratops. When those lights faded and you encountered death's alien glare in the form of an ugly looking giant shrimp, you knew those Bydo boys weren't the type of evil intergalactic federation to just roll over and hand you the keys to their demise. A utterly fantastic conversion that even boasts its very own secret level.

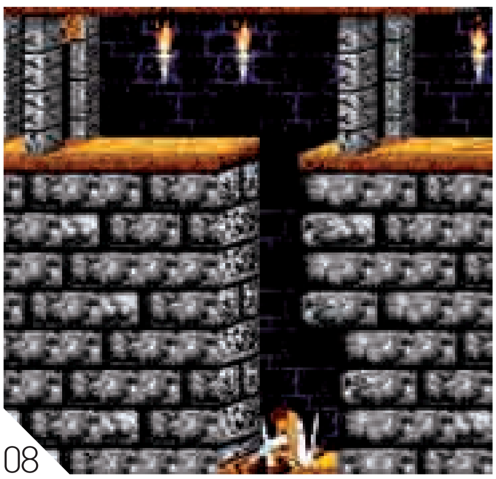



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## BAKU BAKU ANIMAL

» **RELEASED:** 1998
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SPACE HARRIER

06 **Yes, it's another tried and tested take on *Tetris*, but Sega's excellent *Baku Baku Animal* was a puzzle game that finally gave those faceless regimented sprites a touch of character.** The falling tiles were made up of either types of food or animal faces, and the aim was to simply bunch the falling groceries together and get the corresponding animals to consume them. So the dogs were grouped with the bones, the monkeys with the bananas, the rabbits with the carrots and the pandas with the, well, we're sure you get the idea. It's an incredibly enjoyable little puzzle game that is also extremely addictive. It certainly cocks a leg and whizzes over the Mega Drive yawn-fest that is *Columns*. Arguably the Master System's best puzzler.

## WONDER BOY III: THE DRAGON'S TRAP

» **RELEASED:** 1989
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SHENMUE

07 **Regarded as the best in a long and highly convoluted myriad of multi-titled games, *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* was another addition to this stable of run-'n'-jump-cum-adventure-type outings.** This one is the most finely tuned in terms of gameplay and despite its length it somehow maintains a great pace throughout. Within its first few minutes you enter a castle, blind some cyclops, uncover a strange dungeon and battle a dinobot that turns you into a dragon with its last dying breath. After that you're turned into a variety of different animal, which gradually allows you to explore the huge game world. A great adventure that ever Master System fan needs to own.

## PRINCE OF PERSIA

» **RELEASED:** 1989
» **PUBLISHED BY:** BRODERBUND
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?

08 **You have 60 minutes to find a way through this Persian rat-maze to try and stop the evil Grand Vizier Jaffa from marrying your girlfriend and fooling around with her on a giant, rotating heart-shaped bed.** This will be no easy feat, however, as the route is precarious and the pitfalls are plenty. But with a game so fluid and colourful, seeing your Arabian protagonist drop a thousand feet and hit the ground like a sack of potatoes was one of the most charming-looking deaths on the Master System. This conversion – like all the rest – looks great. The only bad point to be found is the Master System's doughy D-pad isn't really a fan of precision. It's still a cracking platformer though and is arguably one of the greatest on the System. If only it wasn't so hard.

## SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** OUTRUN

09 **Up, down, left, right, A, B, C, Start, sadly proved impossible to perform on the Master System's cumbersome control pad, but the most well-known level-select cheat ever wasn't the only thing that was altered for the Master System port.** Due to the graphical 8-bit chasm that presented itself, *Sonic*'s first (and second, for that matter) outing on the system was a complete redux of its 16-bit sibling. However, the Master System version was all the better for it and proved to be a stunning platformer in its own right. It also meant that those who owned both a Master System and a Mega Drive would be treated to two slightly differing classic *Sonic* adventures. Now surely that can only ever be seen as a very good thing?

## PHANTASY STAR

» **RELEASED:** 1988
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SEGA
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** RISTAR

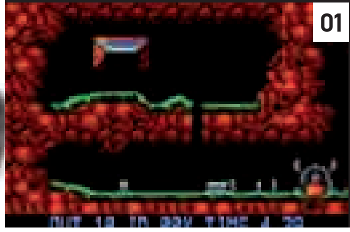
10 **Sega's freshman RPG epic would smite its first winged-eyeball on the Master System. There's a tiring amount of features, strategy and powering-up in the game, and the 3D tunnel effects were dazzling.** *Phantasy Star* was a more than worthy sparring partner to Miyamoto's prevalent *Zelda* and Square Enix's *Final Fantasy* series, mainly because it chose a setting that was instantly at odds with the generic fantasy worlds of *Zelda* and *Final Fantasy*. It's a beautifully constructed game, boasting a fantastically epic planet-hopping storyline polarised around one girl's quest to seek revenge for the untimely death of her nosey brother. However, unlike Sega's sophomore retribution epic, the original *Phantasy Star* doesn't pick up its football and disappear home in the 89th minute.



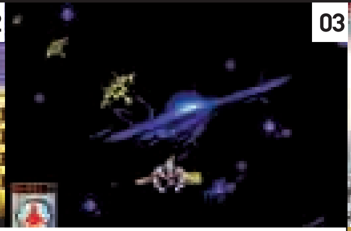
01 LEMMINGS
02 SHINOBI
03 GALAXY FORCE
04 CLOUD MASTER
05 MORTAL KOMBAT
06 PAPERBOY
07 WONDER BOY
08 ALEX KIDD: THE LOST STARS
09 BLACK BELT
10 DESERT STRIKE
11 FANTASY ZONE
12 MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER
13 DICK TRACY
14 POPULOUS
15 CHASE HQ
16 KLAX
17 SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2
18 PAC-MANIA
19 DOUBLE DRAGON
20 ALF
21 CHOPLIFTER!
22 CHUCK ROCK
23 MARBLE MADNESS
24 PSYCHO FOX
25 VIGILANTE
26 WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND
27 DEAD ANGLE
28 ARCADE SMASH HITS
29 THE CYBER SHINOBI
30 JURASSIC PARK
31 PENGUIN LAND
32 BUBBLE BOBBLE
33 ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD
34 FIRE & FORGET II
35 STAR WARS
36 THE NEW ZEALAND STORY
37 RAMPAGE
38 BAKU BAKU ANIMAL
39 CAPTAIN SILVER
40 HEROES OF THE LANCE
41 JAMES POND II: CODENAME ROBOCOD
42 BANK PANIC
43 ALIEN SYNDROME
44 MICRO MACHINES
45 TEDDY BOY
46 OPERATION WOLF
47 CALIFORNIA GAMES
48 GOLDEN AXE
49 OUTRUN
50 SHADOW OF THE BEAST
51 ASTRO WARRIOR
52 DR ROBOTNIK'S MEAN BEAN MACHINE
53 FANTASTIC DIZZY
54 BUGGY RUN
55 ECCO THE DOLPHIN
56 POWER STRIKE II
57 HANG-ON
58 NINJA GAIDEN
59 ENDURO RACER
60 DANAN: THE JUNGLE FIGHTER
61 PHANTASY STAR
62 XENON 2
63 GOLVELLIUS: VALLEY OF DOOM
64 ALEX KIDD IN SHINOBI WORLD
65 BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA
66 LASER GHOST
67 FORGOTTEN WORLDS
68 KUNG FU KID
69 SUPER KICK OFF
70 IMPOSSIBLE MISSION
71 GHOSTBUSTERS
72 ZILLION
73 ALIEN STORM
74 DYNAMITE DUX
75 GREAT GOLF
76 RENEGADE
77 SPACE HARRIER
78 ALTERED BEAST
79 GHOST HOUSE
80 RAMBO III
81 ESWAT: CITY UNDER SIEGE
82 R-TYPE
83 YS: THE VANISHED OMENS
84 SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
85 TRANSBOT
86 THE LUCKY DIME CAPER STARRING DONALD DUCK
87 CASTLE OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE

# MASTER SYSTEM and the rest...

IT MAY HAVE BEEN UP AGAINST THE OVERWHELMING POWER OF THE NES, BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP THE MASTER SYSTEM FROM HAVING ITS OWN SHARE OF CLASSICS AND STINKERS

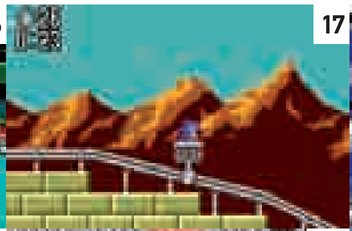


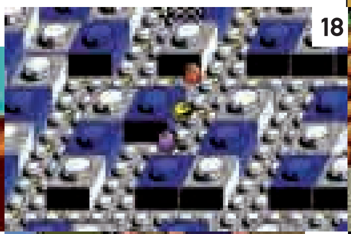




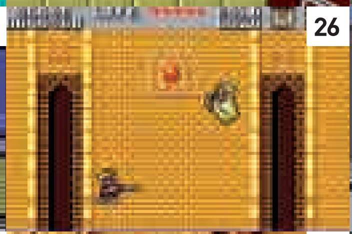




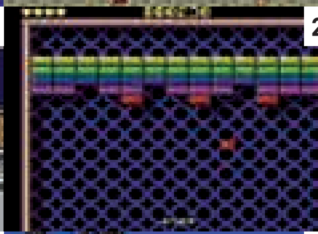






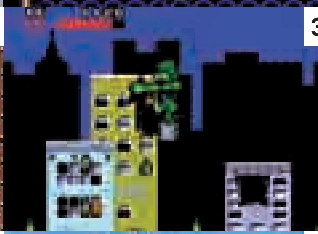



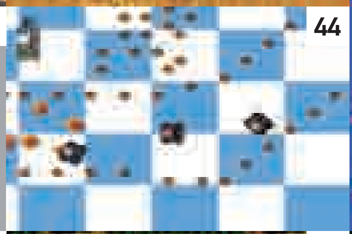




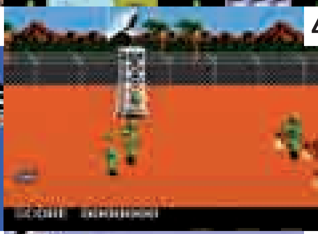


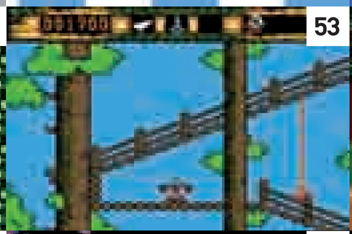


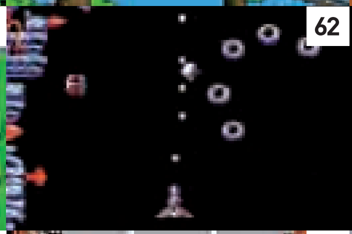




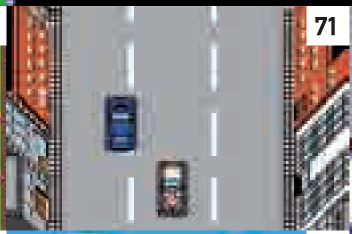








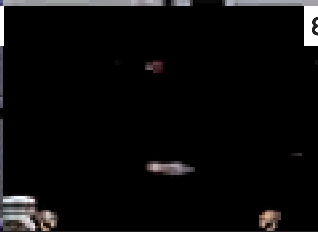












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HELP AN OVERWEIGHT PENGUIN WIN BACK HIS GIRLFRIEND IN THIS BIZARRE PLATFORMER

# YUME PENGUIN MONOGATARI

**There have been many peculiar premises used in videogames, but helping a lovelorn, binge-eating penguin win back the affections of his fickle ex-girlfriend has to rank among the weirdest. Stuart Hunt gets emotionally involved with Yume Penguin Monogatari**

## IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
» **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** NA
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £15+
» **CAN'T IMPORT? THEN WHY NOT TRY:** SUPER MARIO WORLD (SNES)

Personally, your reviewer here has always preferred Super Mario Bros 3 over its 16-bit sequel - but that's because he's a fan of racoon costumes and NES cartridges. However, Mario's 16-bit debut really deserves special mention for refining the keep-in elements introduced in Mario the Third and for finally allowing Shigsey to add a dinosaur into the gameplay.





**Interesting Fact**
The emperor penguin is the tallest and heaviest of all the penguins. This isn't down to a diet of apples and rice cakes though, these guys chow down on krill, which is a shrimp-like crustacean. Their average weight is anywhere between 44lb and 99lb, making them one of the heaviest birds on the planet.



» Penta tried to audition for Colin Farrell's stunt double in *Phone Booth*. Unfortunately, he didn't answer the phone fast enough.

メガ駆動機構

**Hardly crying out for 'run-'n'-jump' games, the NES became somewhat of a meeting ground for waifs and strays of the genre. Even franchises that weren't classified as platformers would shoehorn themselves into that guise when they appeared on the system. It seems during the Nineties even a game based on filling wardrobes with marshmallows could be adapted into a videogame as long as it involved ledge leaping and collecting things.**



» The level that's just one giant cake should really be the final stage. Surely it represents the ultimate gauntlet for a huge glutton.

So, after he had heroically battled interstellar foes in *Parodius* and allowed Hideo Kojima to cut his teeth on his pointless wings in *Penguin Adventure*, a long hiatus spelled a physical disaster for Konami's Penta the penguin. He packed on the pounds and his girlfriend, Penko, seeing him as a 'style-lacking pig', dropped the emotional bombshell that she no longer found him attractive and was now dating the flightless bird's equivalent of Flava Flav. Pleading with her to give him one last chance to get back in shape, she offers him an ultimatum: lose the fat and answer her telephone calls within 180 seconds. Quite a random pairing of demands you might think, but we know how our girlfriends get when we don't answer their calls in 180 seconds: they make us watch *Dirty Dancing* and tell us to 'improve', so Penta gets off pretty lightly. Fortunately, all of *Yume Penguin Monogatari*'s wacky elements come together in this fantastic platform game that, sadly, only Japanese NES owners could p-p-pick up and play.

The most endearing thing about *Yume Penguin Monogatari* is its absurdity. Its crazy

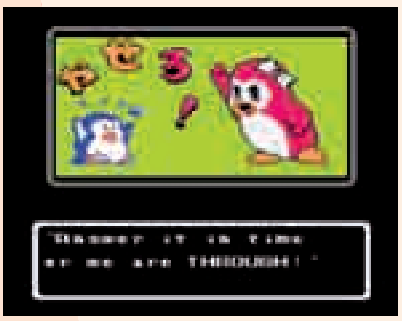
# N PROMISE






» *Yume Penguin Monogatari* is blessed with one of the best videogame intros ever. It's so good that we've grabbed it in its cinematic entirety for you to see…





premise and lampoon gameplay help set it well apart from the plethora of other sensible platform titles that were released on the NES around the same time; games that involved plumbers warping to mushroom kingdoms and medusa-slaying cupids named Pit. Here we're presented with a platform game that's simply about one penguin's endeavour to achieve the body beautiful.

Rather than a depleting health bar, success is measured with a unique fitness meter. It displays Penta's target weight for each stage, which is marked on the bar with a broken heart. Failure to fall inside the marker before Penko makes her call will mark the end of the relationship and produce an upsetting cut-scene showing a teary-eyed Penta trying to hold himself together for one final goodbye.

If Penta comes into contact with any pixilated grub on his travels he simply can't stop himself from stuffing his face, so enemies will hinder his progress by throwing food at him. It's your job to safely steer your portly protagonist through the game, dodge those flying calories and reach the telephone at the end of the stage before his ex rings to find out how his new diet is going.

Upon reaching the end of each level Penko will call to offer encouragement and helpful four word tips for the prevailing boss battle, but always under the watchful eye of her new slimy beau, Ginji, who will quickly order his minions to hanker Penta's plight when she's out of earshot.

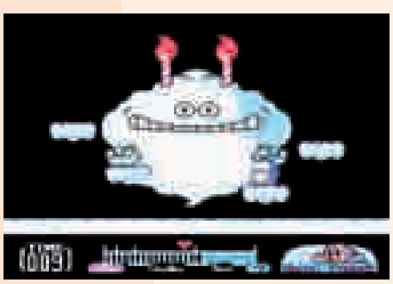
In his heavy, puffy-faced state Penta will attack enemies by belly-flopping on them. But trimming down allows him to kick and squawk out a projectile attack that will burst the eardrums of his enemies and make negotiating the levels easier. The more food Penta consumes, the larger he becomes and the more sluggish his movements feel. To remedy his rapid weight gain Penta can work out by fighting enemies and chugging down on the 'shape up' diet drinks that materialise throughout the game.

As all of the enemies have an odd affinity to feeding, the boss encounters somehow manage to make even *Dynamite Headdy*'s end-of-level guardians look rational – and that's a game that had you fighting a giant baby head on a stick! From Capt Pooh's ham-launching, flying pirate ship to the giant, apple-spewing cloud of cake icing that needs its candles putting out, the game is swathed in this quirky surrealism that captures perfectly the fertile imaginations of Eastern developers.

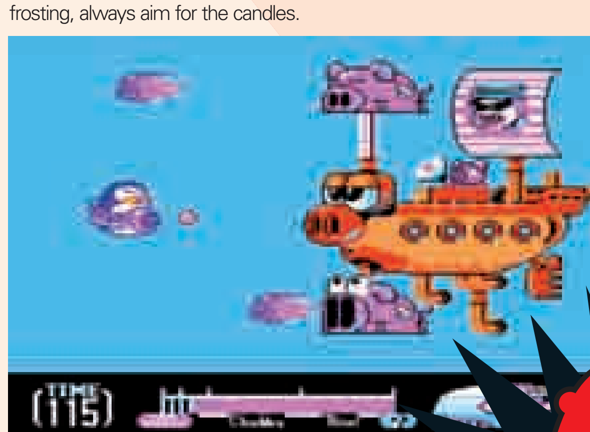
As the game only includes six stages, Penta's adventure isn't one that will test the mettle of ardent platform professionals, but it does offer a colourful assortment of platforming fun that's bolstered by its striking graphics and quirky animations. The incredibly varied, bizarre missions will see Penta scale the tiers of a giant birthday cake, balance aloft the tentacles of a giant octopus and put his *Parodius* piloting skills to use in the side-scrolling shooter sections that punctuate the platform action.

What really sets the game aside is its gameplay. The foes in the game can't actually kill Penta, they are merely troublesome hurdles that he must jump or kick over. The real victory lies within; self recovery holds the key to success. You can topple its end-of-level baddies in every sitting, but if you deliver that final killing blow while looking like a sack of blue glob, victory will be snatched from your flippers.

So, there are a few valuable life lessons to be found lying in between the enveloping layers of flab in *Yume Penguin Monogatari*: female penguins seem to be extremely shallow, never trust a penguin dressed like a pimp, and should you ever have to fight a massive chunk of cake frosting, always aim for the candles.



» "Um, just thought I should let you know, you've got a bit of toothpaste around your mouth."



» Don't swallow the flying hams, they've got loads of calories.

私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある

# LUCKY & WILD

## STUART IS FORCED TO EXPLAIN HIMSELF





- **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **GENRE:** BUDDY COP SIMULATOR
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** 50P, IF YOU CAN FIND ONE



### HISTORY

**It's very difficult to select a favourite game of all time. It almost makes your head hurt as much as trying to answer that can-o'-worms question that is: what generation draws the line on retro gaming?** Games are personal things, so it's easy to find someone whose opinions of a game, or their classification of retro, differs from your own. But if we all agreed on all things all of the time then I think you'd all agree that the world would be an annoyingly agreeable place.

*Lucky & Wild* has its faults, and I've never pretended to even consider that it would ever fall within the top ten greatest games ever made (the fact that it never found a home port should speak volumes about its popularity). However, if basing my selection on the enjoyment and fun that I've had from any one videogame then I would have to hand the accolade to *Lucky & Wild*.

Of all the arcades I have stumbled into, I have only seen its cab once, and that was in a well-propped Egyptian-themed arcade near where I grew up (not in Egypt I hasten to add). Many games came and went with my cash, but I'd always remember pushing a few quid into *Lucky & Wild*. I think I was worried that if it wasn't bringing in any money, it would get substituted for another penny-falls game.

It doesn't pretend to be anything other than a 15-minute shotgun blast of escapism. And manically spinning its steering wheel to dodge a grenade, while your mate frenetically squeezed the triggers of the cab's two plastic Berettas to blow the bad guys away, slotted you both into the role of an iconic buddy cop duo for that 15 minutes.

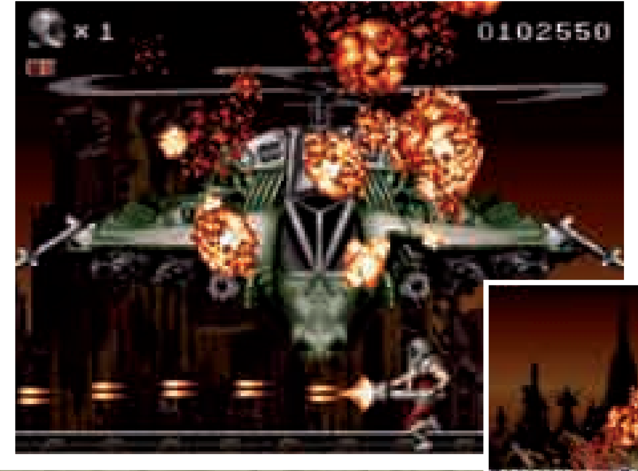
With the game asking you to chase and run down a series of absconding perps, it's a blatant spin on Taito's classic *Chase HQ*. You start each level by witnessing that stage's boss riddling your windscreen with bullets before they take to the world's most high-octane roads. Now what could be more fun than that?

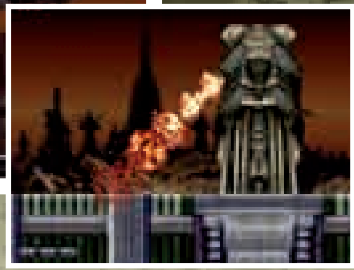

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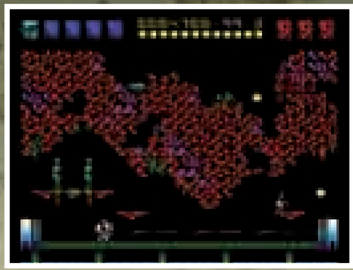


# TOP 25 Run-'n'-Guns

Darran and Stuart are your hosts this time out. Two soldier's of fortune, nearly ousted from the Imagine offices for the sheer velocity of noisy gunfire and 'oh yeahs!' that emanate from around their desks. So pity these fools, as they rip the arms off their shirts, don bandanas and barrel-roll through Retro Gamer's top 25 run-'n'-gun games











## Rendering Ranger: R2

■ **Year:** 1995
■ **System:** SNES
■ **Publisher:** Virgin Interactive

**25** **With Manfred Trenz's *Turrican* series known by so many, it's somewhat disheartening that his glorious SNES effort, *Rendering Ranger*, never gets the love it deserves.** Taking its name from its stunningly rendered sprites, *Rendering Ranger* is an insanely tough blaster that will have most gamers gnashing their teeth with frustration, due to its difficulty and no-nonsense, old-school approach.

Perseverance is key though, as once you become used to the sheer onslaught of enemies that Trenz continually throws at you, you'll quickly discover it to be an incredibly slick and polished blaster that is as addictive, as its huge bosses are terrifying. With its choice of different weapons, stunning-looking visuals and finely honed gameplay, *Rendering Ranger* easily secures itself a place in our top 25.

## Rex

■ **Year:** 1988
■ **System:** ZX Spectrum
■ **Publisher:** Martech Games

**24** **Oh come on, did you really think that a game featuring a gun-toting rhinoceros wasn't going to make it on to our list?**

There was much deliberating as to whether we should include *Rex* at the expense of the equally fine *Cobra* and *Exolon*, but the cute rhinoceros eventually won out thanks to the enormous sprawling game world he inhabits, and the rampant violence that ensues once he's unleashed within it.

While his sheer bulk prevents him from participating in anything more than a vigorous plod, *Rex*'s beautifully detailed world and satisfying weapon more than make up for his sluggish shortcomings. Although many Spectrum and Amstrad owners will no doubt be familiar with the huge mine that Rex first finds himself in, only the most skilled will reach the huge tower that provides the real meat of *Rex*'s gameplay.

## Shinobi

■ **Year:** 1987
■ **System:** Arcade
■ **Publisher:** Sega

**23** **Alright, so technically *Shinobi* is probably more of a run-'n'-shuriken than an actual run-'n'-gun game, but that doesn't stop it from being anything less than a thrilling arcade experience.**

While some of the later titles in the *Shinobi* franchise, arguably, improved on the original's, admittedly, simplistic formula – you basically have to rescue some kids and then escape to the exit – few can match the sheer pace, excitement, and, indeed, variety at which the arcade version unfolds.

Like Namco's *Rolling Thunder*, it's possible for your ninja to leap between floors in order to dodge enemy bullets and ignore his more dangerous opponents, but, unlike Namco's classic, your intrepid ninja can employ deadly magic, which makes his bouts against *Shinobi*'s many memorable bosses considerably easier.

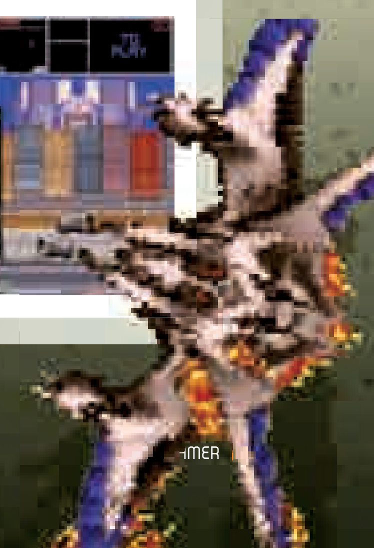
## NARC

■ **Year:** 1988
■ **System:** Arcade
■ **Publisher:** Williams

**22** **In 1988, after a six-year hiatus from the arcade circuit, Williams released a violent run-'n'-gun that made use of digitised visuals.** It was reputed to be developed in response to Nixon's flailing 'war on drugs' campaign, but, ironically, despite its strong anti-drug message – ie, all drug pushers get blown to pieces by a cop dressed in one primary colour – it didn't win many fans among over-anxious parents. They argued that the game's satirical depiction of violence was unintentionally glamourising the very subject it was trying to smite. While there's no question that time has helped to expose the game's slow and repetitive gameplay, the impact that it had on the genre gives it a wild card for this list. And it still puts a smile on your face busting a perp and seeing them fly angelically into the clouds, like Mary Poppins.

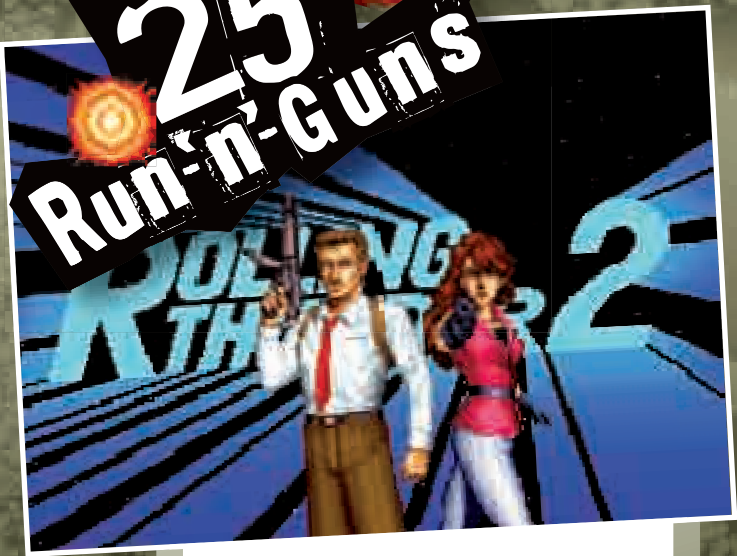






"Rendering Ranger is an insanely tough blaster that will have most gamers gnashing their teeth with frustration, due to its difficulty and no-nonsense, old-school approach"

# Top 25 Run-'n'-Guns



## Rolling Thunder 2

■ **Year:** 1990
■ **System:** Arcade
■ **Publisher:** Namco

**21** ***Rolling Thunder*'s fusion of spy narrative, striking anime graphics and dampened down run-'n'-gun gameplay (it does feel somewhat plodding when compared to other games of the genre) proved a massive hit with arcade-goers back in 1986.** But it was the sequel that really shined through as the best in the series. As well as upping the speed of the action a few notches and adding co-op play, Namco actually gave a little more thought and variation to the level designs. Its plot, continuing the theme, involved saving the world from Gelda: a band of robotic-fox-looking jerks who can't stop themselves from continually opening and shutting doors.









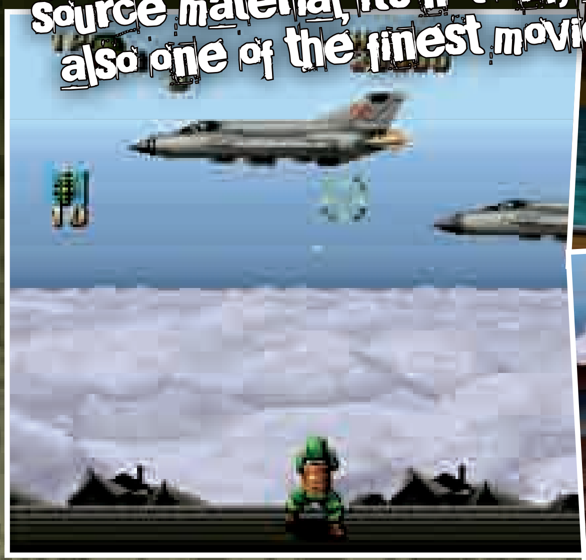
## Alien 3

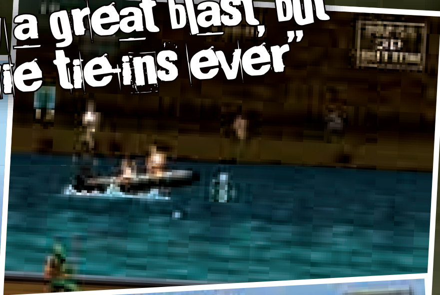
■ **Year:** 1992
■ **System:** Mega Drive
■ **Publisher:** Acclaim

**20** **Despite having absolutely bugger all to do with the plot of the movie (we've watched it four times now and we can still only count one alien in the entire movie), *Alien 3* showed us how artistic licence could be wielded to great effect.** A multi-tiered run-'n'-gunner with plenty of ladders, it was your job to find and liberate prisoners, which, given that the game's set on a prison complex, begs the question: is this game morally treading the road of righteousness? Anyway, putting all that digression aside, *Alien 3* offered a great deal of depth through exploration, and despite the criticisms of its source material, it's not only a great blast, but also one of the finest movie tie-ins ever.



"Alien 3 offered a great deal of depth through exploration, and despite the criticisms of its source material, it's not only a great blast, but also one of the finest movie tie-ins ever"







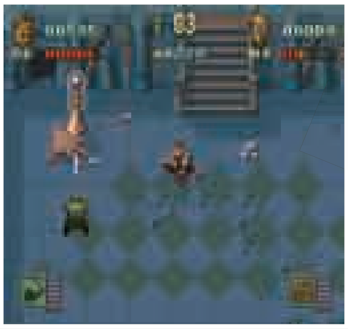
## Nam-1975

■ **Year:** 1990
■ **System:** Neo Geo AES
■ **Publisher:** SNK

**19** **SNK's *Nam-1975* is a rather unusual beast.** Ignored by many arcade-goers, quite possibly because it didn't deliver on the ground-breaking visuals that SNK had initially promised, it now gets unfairly dismissed. No more, though.

Taking its cues from Red Corporation's single-screen blaster *Cabal* – which allowed you to fire anywhere on screen when the fire button was pressed, or run left and right when it wasn't – SNK decided to take Red Corporation's fantastic idea and run with it. Quite literally.

By adding scrolling to the static locations of *Cabal*, SNK not only greatly opened up *Nam-1975*'s already hectic gameplay by delivering a title that played a hell of a lot better than it looked, but it also helped to prove that you don't necessarily have to come up with fresh new ideas in order to create a classic game. All you needed was to have big enough balls to nick somebody else's ideas and simply improve on them.





# The Chaos Engine

■ **Year:** 1993

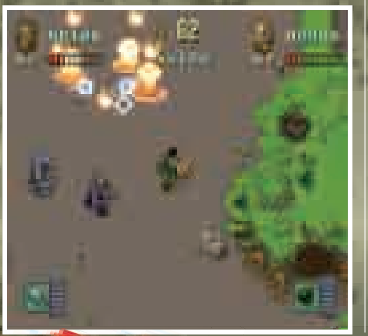
■ **System:** SNES

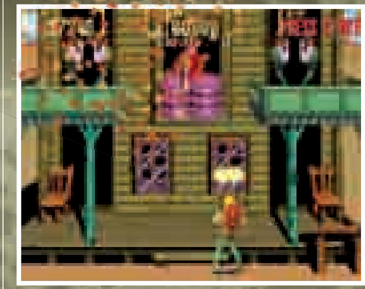
■ **Publisher:** Renegade

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**Back in the days of the Amiga and Atari ST, the Bitmap Brothers seemed untouchable.** Almost bulletproof, if you will. In fact, you could say that the Wapping-based developer was firing on all cylinders. And now that puntastic opening is out of the way, let's celebrate the metallic – all features about Bitmap Brothers' games must feature the word metallic at least once – brilliance that is, *The Chaos Engine*.

As it had done with both *Speedball 2* and *Xenon 2*, the Bitmap team looked for a suitable genre – in this case the run-'n'-gun – and delivered a title so polished it was sued by Mr Sheen. With its fast-paced gameplay and cool visuals, it not only cemented the Bitmap Brothers as a developer at the top of its game, but also proved that collecting keys could be perfectly exciting if you threw a bunch of psychotic enemies into the mix.







# Sunset Riders

■ **Year:** 1991

■ **System:** Arcade

■ **Publisher:** Konami

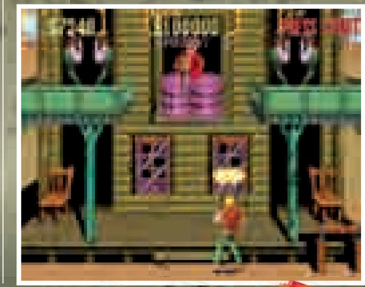
17

**With so many run-'n'-guns content to place you in the frame of a pumped-up action hero, it's refreshing to discover the quartet that appear in Konami's *Sunset Riders*.**

Rather than follow the route of many of its peers, *Sunset Riders*, instead, assaults you with its gaudy colours, varied level design and well-honed gameplay. Like Capcom's *Gun Smoke*, a bounty is offered at the start of each level and it's down to your four cowboys to hunt down the good-for-nothing varmints and put them to justice. Wild West-style.

Although very similar to Konami's *Contra* series, *Sunset Riders* ups the ante by offering improved levels, zany cartoon visuals and plenty of slapstick routines that see your hapless heroes walking into rakes, getting crushed by falling rocks and having to avoid cattle stampedes.

It's camper than a wrestling match between Julian Clary and Paul O'Grady, and, yes, the colours used are liable to make your retinas explode, but once you get a taste for Konami's coin-op classic you'll find there's no going back. Yeehaw.



**"Mercs is a game full of neat features that help to separate it from its peers, and it's also one of the toughest run-'n-gun's we've ever come across"**



# Mercs

■ **Year:** 1990

■ **System:** Arcade

■ **Publisher:** Capcom

16

**Why anyone would bother kidnapping the ex-President of the United States is a complete mystery to us, but then that might explain why the military would only send three mercenaries dressed like pop stars for the rescue.** And while we appreciate that *Merc*'s African setting makes for an extremely bright and sunny-looking game, surely sunglasses, bleached hair and spray tans are a tad unnecessary when it comes to urban warfare?

Well, anyway, Capcom's sequel to *Commando* is a fantastically expensive arcade game to complete, and playing through the Mega Drive conversion with the infinite continue's code is still one of the most taxing game experiences known to man. Boasting a great selection of weapons, (including a Mickey Mouse gun that fires green bowling balls), and the chance to control vehicles Jackal-style, *Mercs* is a game full of neat features that help to separate it from its peers, and it's also one of the toughest run-'n'-gun's we've ever come across.



## Rapid Reload aka Gunners Heaven

■ **Year:** 1995
■ **System:** PlayStation
■ **Publisher:** SCEI

**15**

**Poor *Rapid Reload*, squeezed between the sleek polygons of *Ridge Racer* and *Battle Arena Toshinden* upon release, this 2D blaster went somewhat unnoticed as a launch title for the PS.** It's an underplayed classic and that's a real shame, because it's great. While it unscrupulously parades itself around like a *Gunstar Heroes* companion piece, there are areas to this game that actually give the Treasure classic a severe run for its money (yes, seriously). And besides, almost every game on this list is guilty of plagiarism in some form or another, it's just that this one does it under the cover of a slightly demented storyline, involving treasure hunters, the Pumpkin Heads, and a protagonist called Axel Sonics.



## Elevator Action Returns

■ **Year:** 1994
■ **System:** Arcade
■ **Publisher:** Taito

**14**

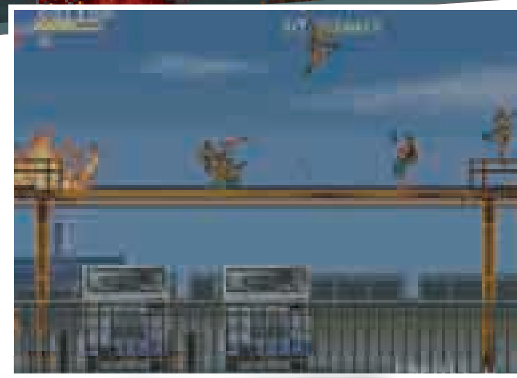
***Elevator Action* was not a good game.** It was slow, it looked terrible and it was about as exciting as watching someone, who's watching someone watch paint dry.

The sequel, however, is a follow-up of epic proportions – if it was a film it would be *The Godfather Part II* – that takes everything that was bad about the original and says, "Look, that was crap, this is how you make a great game."

Although its core concept is near identical to its arcade parent – defuse a set amount of bombs before moving on to the next bomb-filled location – Taito's sequel is imbued with an incredibly frantic energy that perfectly captures the sheer exhilaration of racing through its slummy locations in order to find those constantly ticking bombs.

While it certainly features more platforms than other titles in this feature, *Elevator Action Return*'s hyper-kinetic gunplay and stupidly high body count, along with its slick, fast-paced action ensures that the player is never left in any doubt as to where this superb sequel's actual true calling lies. It may have taken Taito 11 years to magic up its stylish sequel, but the end result was more than worth the wait.



"Elevator Action Returns is a follow-up of epic proportions - if it was a film it would be The Godfather Part II"

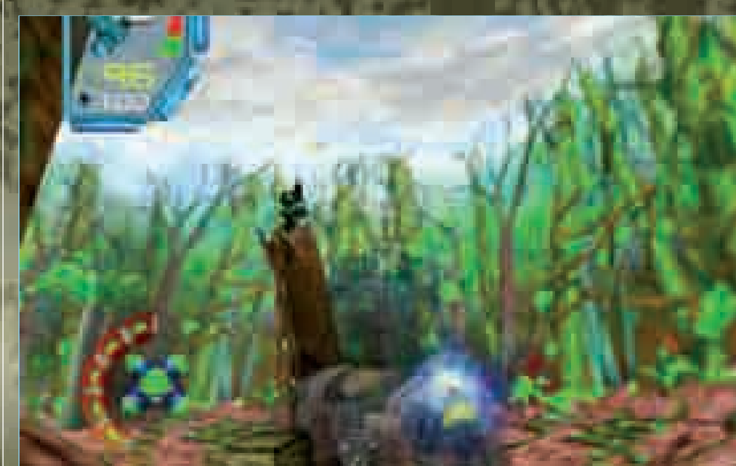
## Jet Force Gemini

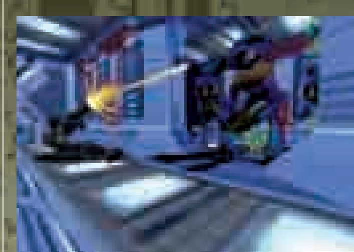
■ **Year:** 1999
■ **System:** N64
■ **Publisher:** Rare

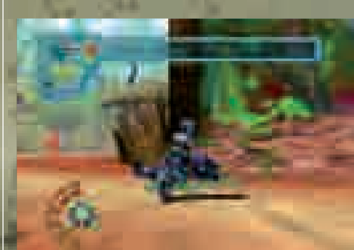
**13**

**Shamefully missed on its release, this great third-person blaster from Rare might have looked cuter than a newborn dolphin that had been dressed in a pink, but inside that soft rubbery exterior were some seriously action-packed guts.**

Sure, it had incredibly complicated controls, which made it feel a tad clunky when you first started playing (you soon got used to them though). However, those qualms could easily be ignored when you witnessed its amazing insect bosses, fell asleep trying to scale the sheer enormity of its levels, realised the exhausting amount of exploring and unlocking there was to do and got sucked in to just how easy it was to want to replay earlier stages. It also had a fantastically comprehensive multiplayer section, boasting a racing mode that made full use of the *Diddy Kong Racing* engine it was running on.













## Alien Breed

■ **Year:** 1991

■ **System:** Amiga

■ **Publisher:** Team 17

12 **Johnson and Stone are two marines who, after patrolling a boring section of their huge ship, the IPCC Miraculous, for six months, are sent to investigate a space station that has mysteriously stopped sending out all transmissions**. While this mission would spell disaster for our two heroes (because the place was teeming with savage aliens), it was a pivotal one for the then reasonably unknown Team 17. Its Amiga classic plonked the top-down shooter inside an eerie Giger backdrop and fused it with *Gauntlet*-style exploration. The visuals of *Alien Breed* captured perfectly the foreboding, claustrophobic feel of being a million miles in the air and locked in a compound with a family of shiny uglies. Not that we'd ever know, mind.

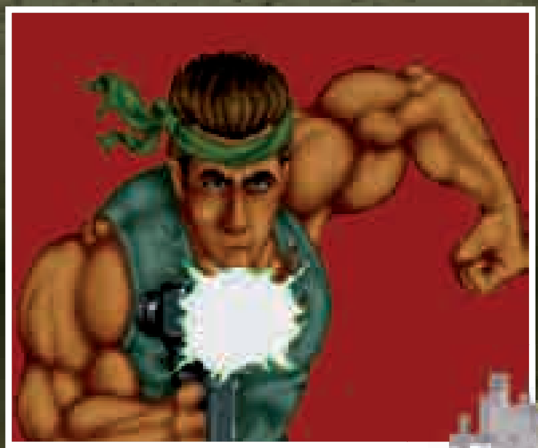
## Midnight Resistance

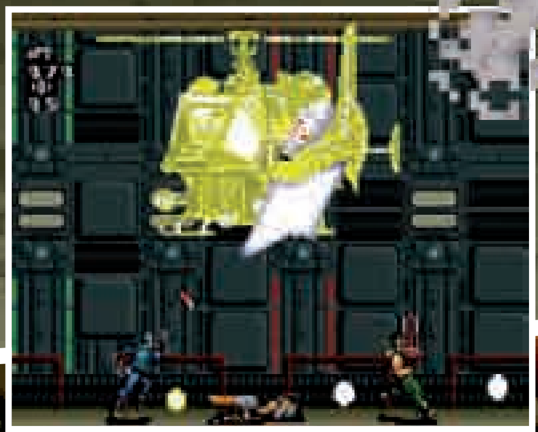
■ **Year:** 1990

■ **System:** Arcade

■ **Publisher:** Data East

10 **Despite being the only game that we can ever recall using a family of cogs for a boss, *Midnight Resistance* in its rawest form is basically Data East's take on Konami's *Contra*.** You control two hardened soldiers who are on a mission to retrieve their kidnapped folks. You can tell these guys were cut from the same cloth as Bill and Lance, as both run about topless, don bandanas and have arms that look like bunches of bananas. It was similar in look and feel to *Contra*, but what made this game unique were its fandangled controls: a dial on the arcade cab allowed you to fire effortlessly in eight different directions. With languishing levels that scaled every which way imaginable, it's a game that almost feels like it has soldier ants in its army pants. It also has many memorable bosses, but our favourite has to be the Red Arrow display team.










## SmashTV

■ **Year:** 1990

■ **System:** Arcade

■ **Publisher:** Williams

11 **With TV and film pushing the levels of taste and entertainment to a point where the term 'desensitisation' no longer needs to exist, if Eugene Jarvis's *SmashTV* ever made it on to our TVs we're sure there would be plenty of people phoning up to vote off the argumentative and self-loving guy who hides the heat-seeking missiles from the other contestants.** Williams was at the forefront of the mature shift that gaming would take in the Nineties. This 'semi-sequel' to *Robotron: 2084* was a hefty coin guzzler that sustained its sibling's addictive gameplay, but dazzled with its raucous riot of pop-cultured flair.






# Top 25 Run'n'Guns



## MDK

■ **Year:** 1997

■ **System:** PC

■ **Publisher:** Interplay

**9** ***MDK* is simply staggering.** Every iota of it was considered, sketched and crafted with a painstaking attention to detail. It actually set gaming precedents that, sadly, because of the blinding glare of console gaming, weren't fully appreciated at the time. Dave Perry and his Newport team's unique vision, warped sense of humour and talent for creating ground-breaking visuals spills over into head-spinning realms with *MDK*.

Every one of its lucid levels shifts in pace, and the odd section even transcends a genre or two. It's admittedly a frantic and tiring game to fully take in, but it was utterly worth it. Playing the role of a janitor-turned-Earth-saviour, it was your job, dressed in a catsuit, and wearing a helmet that looked like a gothic traffic cone, to prevent the menacing intergalactic grunts from sucking the planet's resources dry with their gargantuan mining vehicles. Its quirky use of humour, great level design and peculiar hero, aided by a comical canine cohort, meant it shared more than a passing resemblance to Shiny's iconic annelid, *Earthworm Jim*. A true gaming classic, whatever genre you feel it falls into.







## Turrican II

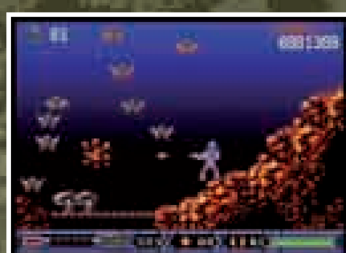
■ **Year:** 1991

■ **System:** Amiga

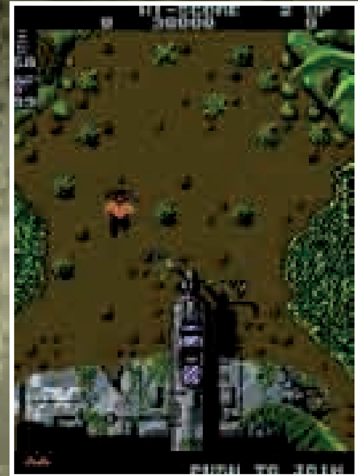
■ **Publisher:** Rainbow Arts

**8** **Set in the slightly dubious time of 3025,09,3$-42 (so apparently in the future we will date things in dollars then?) *Turrican II* finds you playing the role of Bren McGuire.** After his ship and crew are mercilessly murdered by a mysterious race of well-spoken alien lizards, he puts on a Turrican suit and sets out to get his revenge on his intergalactic tormentors.

If 8-bit run-'n'-gunners formed a salivating Rottweiler, then *Turrican II* would sit dangling between its legs. Its awesome soundtrack (composed by Chris Huelsbeck), astonishing hand-drawn visuals and explorative gameplay makes it, justifiably, one of the most popular blasters of all time.







## Ikari Warriors

■ **Year:** 1986

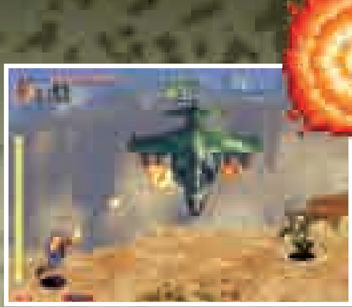
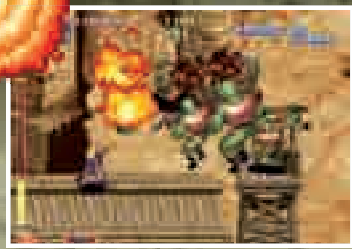
■ **System:** Arcade

■ **Publisher:** Tradewest

**7** **Prepare to take the road less travelled**. That is, of course, until *Ikari Warriors* strolled down it and caused an insurgence of run-'n'-gun heroes to follow suit. Yep, either insanely stupid or just stupidly insane, the Ikari Warriors were the original 'army of two', and took to their entire mission armed with one Uzi and one colourful bandana. If they could get away with it, we're sure they would have rather walked through the entire game in the nuddy, arguing that clothes are restrictive and best used to be ripped and fashioned into colourful bandanas.

Despite being late to popularise the God-perspective run-'n'-gunner, there are a few reasons why the Ikaris get on this roll call: they get to drive a tank, (which is cool enough to actually warrant several reasons) they introduced co-op gameplay and made great use of a fantastic dual-control system. While their sequels were shamefully lacklustre, the original can still walk tall as the ultimate two-person topless blaster.



## Shock Troopers

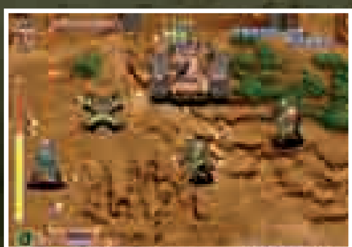
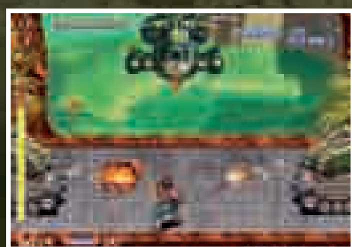
**■ Year:** 1997
**■ System:** Neo Geo MVS
**■ Publisher:** SNK

**6** **Worry not if you've never heard of *Shock Troopers*, just trust us when we say it's one of the best *Commando* clones you'll ever get to play.** Granted, it nicks ideas from almost every run-'n'-gun you can think of, but *Shock Troopers* is such a joy to play, that you won't care less.

With its choice of eight different characters, the option to either control one mercenary or three, and its three distinct routes to the enemy's huge fortress, *Shock Troopers* proves that variety is, indeed, the spice of life.

One minute you're storming through jungles, the next, you're hitching a ride on the back of a truck as it drives deeper into enemy territory. Even climbing up solid cliff faces or swinging down zip lines wasn't uncommon, and the diversity just kept on coming.

Throw in a handy evade attack, some memorable boss encounters and the sort of weaponry that would've even sent the Terminator running for the hills and you quickly begin to realise what we've known for years. *Shock Troopers* owns and it owns hard.

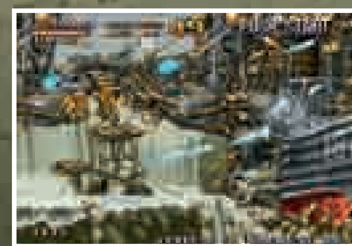
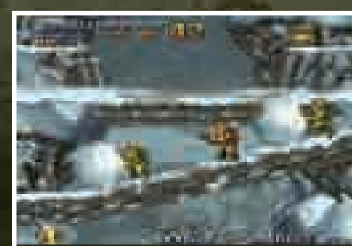


## Metal Slug

**■ Year:** 1996
**■ System:** Arcade
**■ Publisher:** SNK

**5** **After the release of *Gunstar Heroes*, developers realised the absurdity of the run-'n'-gun concept and seemed to cotton on to the notion that one person dismantling an entire army of soldiers, tanks and giant robots with an Uzi was utter insanity.** Cripes, even action purist Konami would eventually try and pump a few barrels of humour into *Contra* through *Hard Corps*. For many, *Metal Slug* is the zenith of the genre and it's easy to see why. Its gloriously vivid, large, chunking cartoon sprites play out inside beautifully crafted, destructible levels, and show the great level of care and attention that Nazca put into its creation. With its war-torn setting and ridiculously complex back story, all juxtaposing harshly against its humour, it's not surprising that the game became so memorable. While the plentiful sequels add little to the formula (apart from a few more zoo animals), *Metal Slug X*, a reinvention of the rushed-feeling sequel, marked such an amazing U-turn for the game it almost found itself edging the original off of its number five spot.



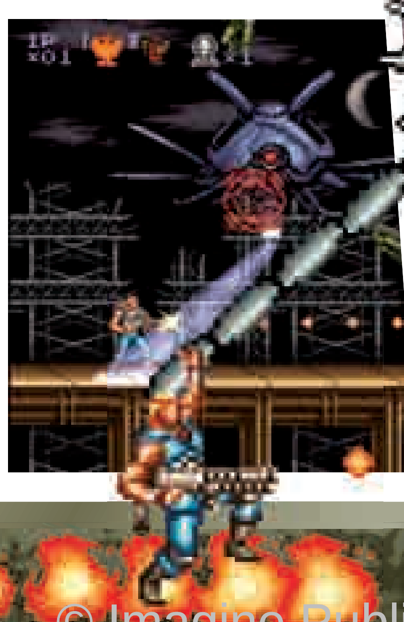



## Contra III

**■ Year:** 1992
**■ System:** SNES
**■ Publisher:** Konami

**4** **Released early on in the Super Nintendo's life, and joining the likes of *Street Fighter II*, *Final Fight* and *Super Mario World*, Nintendo's 16-bit console seemed to have every genre pretty much wrapped up.** The release of *Contra III* showed that Konami was completely in tune with the capabilities of the SNES, and more than willing to see what the wonders of Mode 7 could bring to the run-'n'-gun table.

With its *Jason And The Argonauts*-style bosses, memorably varied levels and a thumping rock soundtrack, the game could almost be seen as a blueprint of how to get every aspect of the genre right. While there's always an impression that Konami approached it with a shade too much pretension (a notion you'll struggle to feel for any of the other games on this list), it's almost impossible to get emotionally tied into any aspect of a blaster's narrative, especially one that finds you unloading bullets into a giant turtle and leaping from 20ft missiles. With a fantastically tight difficulty curve and varied, galloping levels, it's the most clinical game on this list. Our only gripe is Konami's decision to replace Bill and Lance in the PAL release with those bunny-eared Probotector robots.




"Contra III showed that Konami was completely in tune with the capabilities of the SNES, and more than willing to see what the wonders of Mode 7 could bring to the run-'n'-gun table"

# Top 25 Run-'n'-Guns



## Gunstar Heroes

■ **Year:** 1993
■ **System:** Mega Drive
■ **Publisher:** Sega

3

**Treasure's epic run-'n'-gun pastiche comes fully loaded with more cherry-picked stereotypes than you could spray a mini gun at, but, then, how else could you make a great parody?**

*Gunstar Heroes* continually tweaks and contorts in ways that still impress today, and it does so while continually pulling you through each of its memorable stages with this comforting grip of familiarity. When you consider the game was a freshman effort, developed by a band of defunct ex-Konami coders, and released on a machine more akin to cutesy platformers than frenetic blasters, the game and the reception it garnered becomes all the more impressive.

Who knows how Treasure managed to eke so much flair out of the Mega Drive? Voodoo, a time machine, sending its coders down the chimneys of Mega Drive owners while they slept to add a few extra sticks of memory to their machines? However Treasure achieved it, it certainly shook the scales of the 16-bit console war with its potent grenade of guts and bullets. It's riddled with iconic set pieces, a sense of humour and plenty of character, and it's all blended matchlessly through a unique pick-and-mix weapon system that accelerates its gameplay effortlessly.

While it never made any massive strides in originality, it did help to re-invigorate the run-'n'-gun genre inside mainstream gaming. For that reason alone, we have to shake its hand furiously, as if it had just administered the Heimlich manoeuvre and dislodged a spiky blue hedgehog from inside our throats. Had it not been for the hysteria generated by *Gunstar Heroes*, would *Rapid Reload* have become a launch title for the PlayStation? Would there have ever been a *Metal Slug*?

Maybe it's just a wonderful coincidence, but you can't write off the impact *Gunstar Heroes* had on the genre. It certainly helped gamers understand why stalwart blaster fans would fork out hundreds of pounds for obscure Neo Geo games, without as much as an abrasive videogame advert or a glowing game review in sight.



## Robotron: 2084

■ **Year:** 1982
■ **System:** Arcade
■ **Publisher:** Williams

2

**Eugene Jarvis is, without doubt, a gaming God.** How else do you describe someone who has created an arcade game that not only features one of the slickest control systems around, but also turns up on practically every Desert Island Disks article that we have ever printed in the magazine?

After becoming frustrated with the simplistic control method used in Stern Electronic's *Berzerk*, Jarvis decided to go one better and create his own take on the hit coin-op. The end result is a title that not only transcends genres – many would argue that it's just as much a shoot-'em-up as it is a run-'n'-gun title – but remains one of the most addictive blasters that has ever been created.

Much of *Robotron*'s success comes from its sheer simplicity. One joystick dictates your direction of fire, while the other moves your hero around. Although anybody can immediately get to grips with *Robotron*'s straightforward controls, not everyone has the necessary gameplay skills, and the sheer nerve, required to deal with the ridiculous number of enemies that Jarvis insists on bombarding you with. Indeed, *Robotron* is so finely honed that a skilled player can gracefully dance through the thickest of enemy hordes and snatch humans from seemingly impossible situations.

Playing *Robotron* – especially on a dedicated cabinet – is hard work. Intense concentration is required to reach the higher stages to collect as many stranded humans as possible (which is where the bulk of your score comes from). Your senses get constantly assaulted by *Robotron*'s harsh and abrasive sound effects and gaudy visuals, while continual play will make your poor arms feel like they're being wrenched from their sockets.

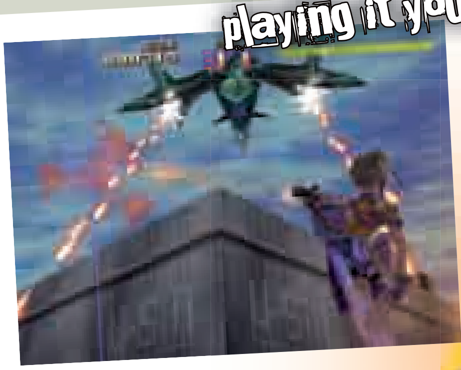
However, you'll still want to go back to it, and not because you're some sort of village idiot who doesn't know any better, but because *Robotron: 2084* is just so darned compelling.

Whenever you lose a life in *Robotron*, it's never because of poor collision detection or unfair enemy AI, it's simply because your own personal greed got the better of you and you took a risk that just didn't pay off.

And that's what makes *Robotron* so satisfying. There's always that 'one more go' factor that convinces you that a further ten-minutes play is all that is required to nail that frustrating level you've been stuck on for so long. A quarter of a century after its arcade debut and we're still hooked on it.



"Sin And Punishment is one of the finest shooters to grace a home console, and by not playing it you're doing yourself a grave disservice"





# Sin And Punishment

- **Year:** 2000
- **System:** N64
- **Publisher:** Nintendo

**1**

**No, you're not seeing things, there really is an obscure Japanese N64 release that few have heard of, and even less will have played, sitting pretty at the top of our prestigious run-'n'-gun chart.**

Before putting pen to paper on a long scathing letter about how *Gunstar Heroes* has been cruelly usurped from its rightful position and how we should be hung, drawn and quartered, please do the following: dip in to your wallet, take out £30 and order yourself a copy (or download it from Nintendo's Virtual Console for a third of the price). Done that? Good. The 'Sorry, I actually agree with you and will never question your authority again' queue is just over there.

Playing *Sin And Punishment* is the best thing in the world. It's better than witnessing an epiphany; it's even better than rooting around the back of your sofa and finding a £5 note when you were really just looking for something to eat. Hell, we'd even go so far as to say that it's possibly Treasure's greatest ever game, and when you consider the Japanese developer's rich heritage that's either high praise indeed, or us being complete and utter idiots (we'd obviously opt for the former).

Released late in the N64's life, when *Super Mario 64* was nothing but a distant memory, and the world and his wife were looking forward to some new console called the Dreamcast, *Sin And Punishment* arrived with very little fanfare, but great critical acclaim. At heart, it's nothing more than a cross between a traditional run-'n'-gun game and an on-rails shooter, but that's telling only half the story. It's a highly energetic blaster that grabs hold of you and, like a terrier playing with a soft toy, refuses to let you go.

While you're constantly moving ever forwards through *Sin And Punishment*'s imaginatively designed game world, you're actually given a surprising amount of control over your little on-screen avatar. Whereas most on-rails shooters simply allow you to fire directly in front of wherever your on-screen hero is currently standing, *Sin And Punishment* enables you to both move and fire independently.

Granted, it isn't the easiest system to get to grips with, initially, but fortunately, the N64 has been blessed with one of the most ergonomically designed controllers to ever grace a console, and while those controls initially appear unwieldy, you soon learn to become one with them.

However, even if *Sin And Punishment* handled awkwardly, you'd still persevere with it, if only so you could see what jaw-dropping sequence Treasure would come up with next.

Although it features the same muddy textures that plagued many N64 releases, *Sin And Punishment* was otherwise a truly impressive beast that effortlessly cartwheels from one gloriously over-the-top set piece to the next. Technically incredible, and capable of shifting around a ridiculously high number of polygons – the astounding navy level remains a technical yardstick by which all similar action titles will be judged – *Sin And Punishment* never ceases to astound you with its sheer aesthetic appeal.

Yet, even though it's arguably one of the best-looking N64 titles ever released, Treasure also made sure that the all-important gameplay was just as refined as those astonishing visuals. As you race through corridors, dodging enemies (thrown at you by powerful physics) facing off against dozens of meticulously designed bosses, you'll find yourself wondering just how on earth Treasure pulled *Sin And Punishment* off, it really is a gob-smackingly good release that was sadly released at the wrong time.

Treasure's remarkable blaster is, quite frankly, one of the finest shooters to ever grace a home console, and by not playing it you're doing yourself a grave disservice. So load up the free N64 cartridge that comes with this month's issue and discover its beauty for yourself.

What do you mean we forgot to include it?





# THE MAKING OF...

# THE JAMES POND TRILOGY

Forget Sean Connery and Roger Moore. If you want a secret agent who you can really depend on then you need to ask for James Pond: Underwater Agent. Damien McFerran dons his flippers and snorkel in order to speak to the creator of this aquatic icon

**It's a fact of life that even the most talented programmer has to start somewhere. However, you sometimes have to wonder how many legendary code-smiths found the raw courage, plucky resilience and unflappable determination to soldier on when faced with shameful and wholly disheartening beginnings.** Take Chris Sorrell, for example. Creator of the bestselling *James Pond* franchise and formerly a major force at Sony's famous Studio Cambridge – Chris experienced a rather inauspicious start to his career in videogame design. "I was a computer-game obsessed Eighties kid whose passion for playing games quickly turned into a desire to create them," he recalls. "I taught myself to program in assembly language and spent many late nights developing demos and games on the Commodore 64. I rebelliously – and, in hindsight, somewhat foolishly – left school at the first opportunity and was lucky enough to find work right away: creating the bitmap artwork for a game based on the TV show *Spitting Image* for a local programmer named Steve Bak." A game based on a satirical puppet show can't be what most aspiring young designers would wish for when they're kneeling at the foot of their beds praying for a route into the industry, but for Chris this was a necessary and vital stepping stone. "It was a humble beginning, but at the time I counted myself very lucky



to have met someone as supportive and generous in sharing his development wisdom as Steve was," he remembers. "We got on really well, and after that project he was looking to start a small development team and invited me to join him. We became Vectordean, which comprised of Steve, myself, and Tim Coupe – who was a programmer and friend of Steve's."

However, although he had secured long-term employment Chris wasn't allowed unhindered freedom from the outset. "As the only artist I was initially focused on creating the artwork for our titles, which meant working in Deluxe Paint to create graphics for several projects before Steve allowed me to indulge my primary passion, which was, of course, programming," he says. First he had to prove himself with a spot of conversion work. "I was responsible for a small conversion project, which was taking one of Steve's old Commodore 64 games – *Hercules* – across to the ST and Amiga, where it became *Yolanda*," he recalls. "After that had been successfully completed I was given the chance to design and code my first original game. At this time we had already been working with Millennium Interactive on several ideas and they were very supportive of my brand-new project." To put this meteoric rise into context it's worth remembering that at this point Chris was barely old enough to order a pint in his local public house. "I was eighteen as work began on the concept that would soon become *James Pond: Underwater Agent*," he says.

Given the predilection for cute cartoon lead characters in the early-Nineties it's unsurprising that Chris chose to eschew realism and create a colourful comic icon. However, he was keen to come up with something that was as distinctive as possible. "Cutesy animals were so often the stars of early-Nineties games," he explains. "I was wracking my brains trying to think of an animal that hadn't been seen before, and whose physical traits and natural environment might offer up something new in the way of mechanics and visuals. I ended up developing some rough Deluxe Paint prototypes of a googly eyed goldfish, brainstormed some underwater mechanics and level ideas, and then pitched the idea to Millennium." It was at this point that the famous moniker came into being. "The project went into development with the working title '*Guppy*' – until one day the name *James Pond* was offered up by Millennium's MD," recalls Chris. "At first it seemed a little cheesy, but the more I thought about it, the more it started to suggest a whole new, wacky spin and, of course, a definite new angle to help sell it to the public and press."

With the name firmly in place, development progressed agreeably. Inspiration came from Chris's personal favourite videogames, "From my previous years of gaming there were a number of titles I held in high regard and my early work took inspiration from these. For *James Pond* the game in question was *Gribbly's Day Out* on the C64. Although it was one of Andrew Braybrook's least lauded games, I really loved it. My goal was to try and transplant some of the feel of the flying mechanics from *Gribbly*'s into *James Pond*'s underwater world." Another title that influenced Chris was Bullfrog's *Flood*. "That was a great game with a really original mechanic, but probably the thing that most directly inspired me at the time



» Every secret agent needs a fairy at their side.

## POND PORTS

Chris Sorrell's aquatic hero has recently found a new lease of life thanks to the fact that the series' highlight *Robocod* has been ported to the GBA, Nintendo DS, PlayStation and PlayStation 2. The conversions showcase ever-so-slightly-improved visuals and new level layouts, resulting in an all-new experience for fans of the series. Although some *Pond* fanatics have taken issue with the tinkering, the games remain largely faithful to the spirit of the series. Chris wasn't involved in the production of any of these ports. "All of the recent updates have been looked after by Gameware Development, the current licence holders for the franchise," he explains. The company is run by Ian Saunter – who just happens to be a former Millennium Interactive development director. *Pond* fans can rest easy – it would appear that the series is in safe and familiar hands.





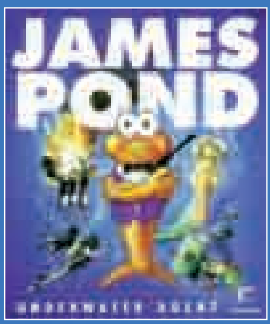
» James hitches a ride with a friendly bird, the resourceful devil.



» Hopefully this screenshot will help get you in to the Christmas spirit.

# THE MAKING OF... THE JAMES POND TRILOGY

## IN THE KNOW




» **RELEASE DATES:** JAMES POND: UNDERWATER AGENT (1990), JAMES POND 2: ROBOCOD (1991), AQUATIC GAMES STARRING JAMES POND AND THE AQUABATS (1992), JAMES POND 3: OPERATION STARFISH (1993)

» **DEVELOPER:** VECTORDEAN, MILLENNIUM INTERACTIVE

» **SYSTEMS:** AMIGA 500/1200, ATARI ST, MEGA DRIVE, SNES, MASTER SYSTEM, GAME GEAR, CD32, ACORN, GAMEBOY, IBM PC, GBA, PLAYSTATION, PLAYSTATION 2, NINTENDO DS, C64

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** VARIES, BUT PRICES ARE GENERALLY LOW FOR ALL GAMES IN THE SERIES

was the graphical style – especially the shading technique used on some of the background blocks."

Chris handled almost all of the work on his debut title – harking back to the glory days of the 'bedroom programming' era. "I was proud to have brought the whole thing together, especially to have worked on code, graphics and design – just like some of the developers whose *Zzap!64* diaries I had so avidly read as a kid," he remembers. "I was also something of an Amiga fanboy, so I was proud to have made a credible Amiga title. The crazy thing about those days was how short the development span was; in just seven months, assisted by Steve Bak and an old school-friend, we built the entire game."

*James Pond* went down well on the 16-bit home computers and – thanks to the support of super-publisher EA – Chris's fishy hero was able to experience new levels of fame. "EA gave us the opportunity to convert *Underwater Agent* to the new Sega Mega Drive console, or 'Genesis' as it was known in the US," he explains. "Steve Bak travelled to EA's headquarters in San Francisco and returned a week later with a custom-built, reverse-engineered Genesis dev-kit as his excess luggage. He completed the conversion in just a couple of months and it became the first European-developed game on the platform."

Although it didn't exactly set the charts alight, *Pond*'s debut was successful enough to ensure that Chris would be granted the opportunity to develop the character further. "I was very fortunate that having given Millennium and Vectordean at least a nibble of success, they allowed me even more freedom to experiment," he says. The question was where to take *James Pond* next? "I think we all recognised the quirky qualities that spoofing *James Bond* had brought to the game, and I had the idea that a 'double spoof' might be a way to take things a step further," Chris explains. "We threw around a few new joke names, and swiftly hit upon '*Robocod*'. I just loved the impossible fusion of a bouncy cartoon fish and a hip, ultra-violent movie cyborg." Again, the programmer found himself looking to the past for inspiration, "For this game I wanted to revisit another of my childhood favourites – *Thing On A Spring*. That set me off thinking about Santa's toy factory having been taken over by an evil Bond-style villain called 'Dr Maybe'. It was a crazy convergence of ideas and influences, something that to me exemplifies the best qualities of the series," says Chris.

Despite the fact that the game was developed in a rather unusual location ("It was a crude second-floor office of a dodgy-looking used-car lot," recalls Chris), *Robocod* remains one of the programmer's most treasured projects and is arguably the high point of the series. "I think, of all the things I've worked on, I look back on this one most fondly," he says. "It was developed with a very modest budget and time frame – about nine months – and with relatively little commercial or creative pressure. It was just a few of us making the wackiest, most fun game we could. Something that perhaps captures this spirit best was the bouncing 'London Bus' enemy. It always gave me a perverse glee to see it stop and shoot out handbag-wielding grannies. Now that's something that I think is pretty unique in the world of gaming," says Chris.

Chris has other reasons to remember *Robocod* fondly, too. "I met the woman who would later become my wife during development of the game," he says. "Our relationship hit a rocky patch and the game wobbled slightly, but then we got back together and I ended up putting a staggeringly cheesy parallax background into one of *Robocod*'s hidden bonus levels – with initialled love hearts no less!" Cheesy-yet-heart-warming moments aside, development was often taxing. "Scrolling was always surprisingly hard to do on the Amiga and I spent some time figuring out a good way to allow for a large, smooth-scrolling play area," says Chris. "Graphically, as was the case with *Underwater Agent*, a big challenge was creating all of the background and character graphics using a single 16-colour palette. I used a lot of the Amiga's 'copper' colour tricks to help make the game as vivid as I could."

Console conversions predictably followed, with the Mega Drive and SNES



» Pond's underwater world is besieged from all sides.

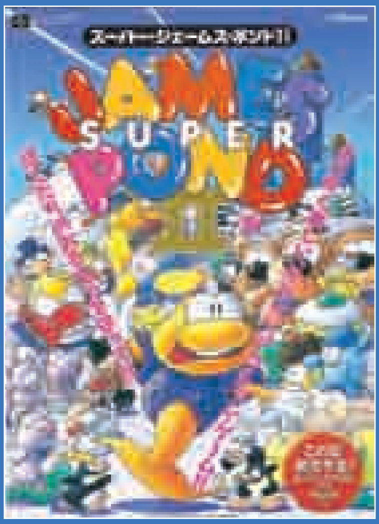



» Hang in there, James!




» Santa's factory forms the central hub of *Robocod*.

## "WE THREW AROUND A FEW NEW JOKE NAMES, AND SWIFTLY HIT UPON 'ROBOCOD'. I JUST LOVED THE FUSION OF A BOUNCY CARTOON FISH AND A HIP, ULTRA-VIOLENT MOVIE CYBORG" CHRIS SORRELL ON NAME GENERATION



» The zany and colourful Japanese artwork for *Robocod*.



» This comic was produced to coincide with the release of *Operation Starfish*.

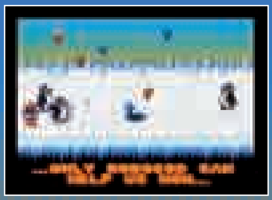
receiving faithful ports. Although Chris wasn't directly responsible for these, he took faith in the knowledge that his baby was in good hands. "I was fortunate that a very talented programmer named Simeon Pashley was working on the Mega Drive version," recalls Chris. "He contributed much of the boss behaviour, too." An improved Amiga 1200 conversion appeared thanks to the equally talented Dean Ashton, who also ported the game to the Amiga CD32 in 1993. Owners of this version (which was one of the first games released for the ill-fated system) were treated to a specially produced animated introduction that succeeded in accentuating the infectiously goofy atmosphere of the game, but there was, sadly, little else in the way of extras.

A wonderful combination of excellent visuals, addictive gameplay and plenty of challenges assured *Robocod*'s success. However, Chris feels there's one aspect of the game that is criminally under-appreciated – time to set the record straight, eh? "One really special aspect of *Robocod* that's seldom mentioned is the audio," he says. "We were extremely fortunate to work with Richard Joseph – one of the industry's truly great musicians who tragically passed away earlier this year. It was a privilege to work with Richard at a fairly early point in his gaming career," he says. "In *James Pond 2*, I think there were about five audio tracks, each as insanely infectious as the last. They couldn't fail to get stuck in your head, and their mood perfectly matched that of the game as Pond stood there in his idle animation bopping away to the music. Also making the terrific quality of the music a real feat was the fact that everything – the samples, score and sound effects – all had to fit in just 28K of memory. For both *James Pond 1* and *2* Richard created title themes that were brilliant parodies of the *James Bond* and *Robocop* themes respectively – turning each of these serious, stern pieces on their head to capture the zany feel of the games while somehow still evoking qualities of the original. Richard was a really terrific guy to work with and an amazing talent – I was really saddened to hear of his death."

With *Robocod* riding high in the multiformat charts, the *James Pond*

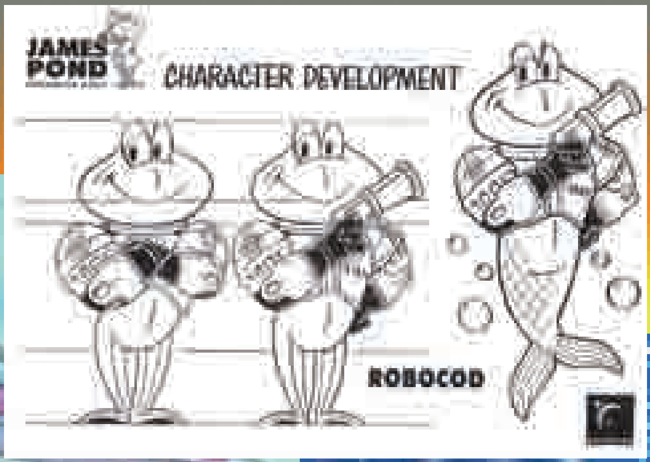
### P-P-PICK UP A PENGUIN

Although *Robocod* gained rave reviews and sold by the bucket load, it's also notable for being one of the first examples of product placement in a videogame. Biscuit company McVitie's paid for the privilege of having the Penguin chocolate bar featured within the game. "Of course as developers we were really cursing the day that request came through," says Chris Sorrell. "Something like that, especially as we were one of the first games to do it, seemed like it could cheapen the game. However, we took the request in good spirits and Penguin proved to be a surprisingly neat fit. In hindsight, I think that the Penguin elements, starting with the wacky intro sequence at the beginning, actually added an unexpected component to the quirky charm that was probably *Robocod*'s greatest strength." It was rumoured that after *Robocod* was released, sales of Penguin biscuits eclipsed those of the rival KitKat for the first time ever.





» An animation cel-produced for the *Robocod* cartoon that graced the CD32 version.




» Some artwork showing how James Pond developed over the course of the series.



» Either James has grown some wings or he's sporting a Jimmy Savile wig in this shot.

# THE MAKING OF... THE JAMES POND TRILOGY

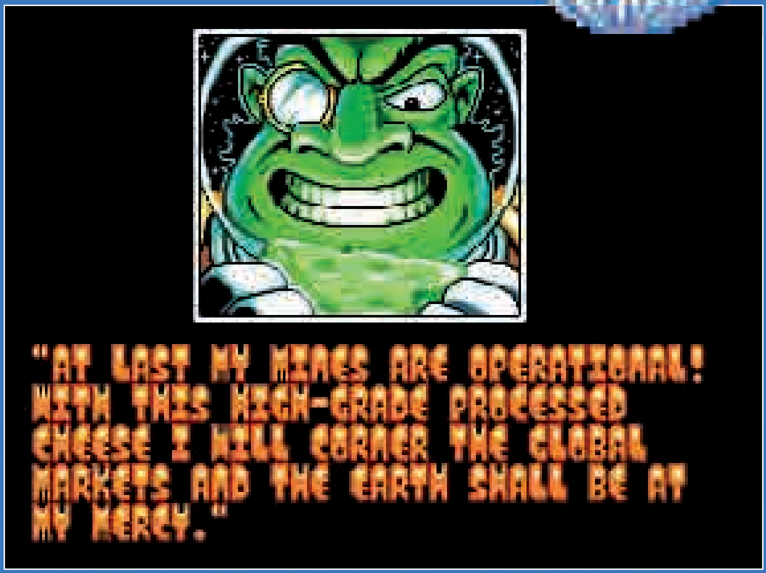
## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

(PICTURED) **MEDIEVIL**
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION
YEAR: 1998

**MEDIEVIL II**
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION
YEAR: 2000

**PRIMAL**
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION 2
YEAR: 2003




» The plot for the third game involved Dr Maybe mining the moon – for cheese.

franchise was now gathering momentum. Keen to exploit this heightened public interest in the character, Millennium decided to create a spin-off in the form of *The Aquatic Games Starring James Pond And The Aquabats*. Chris wasn't involved with this relatively underwhelming *Track & Field* pretender. "*The Aquatic Games* was developed by Steve Bak and a couple of Vectordean's artists as a spin-off from the main series. Although I think all concerned did a great job in the time they had, I was never a big fan of taking the franchise in that direction," he admits.

A proper sequel was in order, and given *Robocod*'s astonishing commercial and critical success – which eclipsed its predecessor with ease – it was almost inevitable that Chris would give the fishy secret agent another outing. "By this time it seemed like there was something of a formula: combine a spoof fishy take on the secret-agent genre with a secondary off-the-wall theme to inject new abilities and settings," says Chris. "For the third game the starting pun was the name '*Splash Gordon*' – I wanted to inject my love of sci-fi into the *James Pond* world! The location was inspired by the Moonraker-esque notion of our now-established bad guy Dr Maybe striving to corner earth's milk-product market by exploiting the vast dairy riches of the moon."

As was the case with the first two entries in the series, Chris admits that he was influenced by a game he held dear to his heart when it came to designing *James Pond 3: Operation Starfish*. However, it was a far more contemporary title this time: Nintendo's sublime *Super Mario World*. "*Super Mario World* gave me many late nights during *Robocod*'s development," he says. "It totally redefined my expectations of the depths a platformer could offer. At about the same time, I was also struck by the flashiness and speed of the new mascot on the block: Sonic. *James Pond 3* was an attempt to try and combine the two."

The commercial success of *Robocod* ensured that Chris and his team no longer had to endure the dingy backdrop of a used car lot – although their new office was almost as unusual. "For *James Pond 3* we moved into a huge, converted mill, whose vast halls and corridors had a distinctly haunted quality as we worked late nights striving to complete the game," remembers Chris. "The spooky atmosphere was amplified at night when the vast cobwebs adorning the never-cleaned windows filled up with the largest, creepiest-looking spiders I think I've ever seen!"

After the comparatively straightforward development periods of the first two games, the third *Pond* title was a real struggle, as Chris admits, "*James Pond 3* had a relatively troubled development. It took twice as long as the first two games combined and, throughout, it seemed like there was a much greater pressure to succeed." Hoping to give *Mario* a run for its money, Chris made sure *James Pond 3* was an epic game in terms of size. "One of the trickier aspects of *James Pond 3* was the fact that the game was huge, but we had no game-save hardware for our lead Mega Drive platform," explains Chris. "We concocted a crazy 'icon sequence' system that required people to write



» *Super Mario World* was a big inspiration for *Operation Starfish*.




» *Robocod* was renamed '*Super James Pond*' for the SNES release.

down a chain of random objects as pass codes. It certainly wasn't ideal, but the code entry screen did feature a really cute mouse that would run on to hug the cheese-wedge-shaped cursor if you waited long enough!"

Although Chris is proud of the game, he does admit that *James Pond 3* didn't live up to the heady expectation created by its amazingly successful forebears, "Looking back I think it ended up being a pretty solid game with a lot of depth and charm. It was the only game of the three that really felt to me like a real console product, rather than a computer game striving to be like a console game. Unfortunately, perhaps in pursuing the big boys and looking more to *Mario* and *Sonic* for inspiration than the less obvious homages of its predecessors, we lost some of the identity and innocence."



» *The Aquatic Games* was a largely unforgettable attempt at expanding the franchise.

When it was published in 1993 *Operation Starfish* struggled to replicate the encouraging sales of *Robocod*, but Chris and the team at Vectordean soldiered on with the series regardless. A radical change of direction was imminent. "The fourth game was going to be called '*The Curse Of Count Piracula*' and was to be a fusion of platformer and *Monkey Island*-style puzzler," he reveals. Unfortunately, it never got past the concept stage. "The rapidly changing state of the console industry caught us off guard and we ended up sending that one to a watery grave."

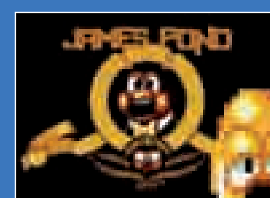
With the *Pond* lineage seemingly at an end, Chris parted company with Vectordean in 1994 and joined Millennium Interactive. It didn't take long for him to make his mark once again, this time with a PlayStation title that would go on to become one of the bestselling games for Sony's burgeoning platform. "I contributed to a few different projects before having the chance to create a brand-new game," he recalls. "This ended up becoming *MediEvil*, which combined my love of Tim Burton's work, and of the arcade classic *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*. That was a real gem of a project and I had the opportunity to work with an awesome team at a great time for the industry." Millennium would eventually be purchased by Sony and become 'Studio Cambridge'.

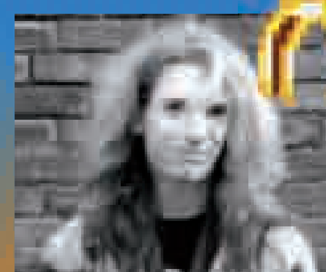
Chris then worked on Sony hits such as *MediEvil II*, *Primal* and a videogame adaptation of the hit TV series *24*, but the complexities of his role soon became an issue, "Although it had worked for *Pond* and *MediEvil*, my duties as both creative lead and programmer on games like *Primal* and *24* stretched my time too thinly." After 13 years at Millennium/Studio Cambridge, a change was in order. "Last year I decided I needed to focus on just one thing and, for now, that is programming," Chris reveals. "I'm now working for Radical Entertainment in Vancouver on its awesome new PS3/360 project, *Prototype*."

Although he's moved onto bigger and better things, does Chris see any future for the *James Pond* series, outside of the numerous budget-label conversions so far released by Gameware (see 'Pond Ports' boxout)? "I'm rather torn on this," he admits. "On the one hand it'd be fantastic to think that *Pond* could live on. On the other, I'd worry that someone else might not make the same *Pond* game I might like to see and perhaps *Pond*'s quaint, old-school charms might be misplaced in today's ruthless marketplace. In a different world I'd sure love to bring *Robocod* bang up to date!"

## SPOOF-TASTIC

Spoofing aspects of modern culture was something Chris Sorrell was keen to do with the *James Pond* games, but he admits he was shocked at how some parties reacted to what was essentially a little bit of light-hearted fun. "The introduction to *James Pond: Underwater Agent* had a jokey spoof of the MGM logo featuring James Pond roaring instead of the classic lion," he explains. "Amazingly, I think this got Millennium Interactive into a little hot water!" No pun intended, obviously. Also, one of the items in *James Pond 1* caused a little concern with EA when it came to publish the game in America, "We had to change the Jack Daniel's pickup, that would cause Pond to teeter around, into a bottle of cod-liver oil – not quite the same effect!"





» An early picture of Chris Sorrell – nice hair.



» Adverts for *Robocod* poked fun at Sega's *Sonic*.

"SUPER MARIO WORLD GAVE ME MANY LATE NIGHTS. IT TOTALLY REDEFINED MY EXPECTATIONS OF THE DEPTHS A PLATFORMER COULD OFFER" CHRIS SORRELL ON HIS INFLUENCES FOR JAMES POND 3



# A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

"ONE, TWO, RARE'S COMING FOR YOU"



- **PUBLISHER:** LJN LTD
- **RELEASED:** 1990
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £15+



## HISTORY

**We can just imagine how the board meeting went…**

Chairman: "So, we've just secured the licence to A Nightmare On Elm Street. It's about a burnt, psychotic paedophile with a hand made of knives who murders kids in their sleep. What sort of game should we make?

Employee: How about a platformer?

Chairman: Perfect, here's a large bag of cash. Oh, and here's a copy of the movie so you can get a feel of the plot and characterisation.

Employee: That won't be necessary, sir. We're going to put giant rats, giant spiders and clapping ghosts in it instead… It's going to be amazing.

Okay, so we're obviously being rather cynical, but you really have to wonder why virtually every film licence that ever appeared on the NES always turned into a platformer.

Still, despite some stodgy controls, impossibly tricky platform sections and infuriating bosses with lying energy bars, Rare's (yes, that Rare) adaptation of Craven's hit slasher flick is a surprisingly enjoyable effort that boasts a fair amount of nifty features.

Most impressive is that up to four players are able to explore Freddy's world – which consists of visiting a number of locations and searching for all of Freddy's bones – at the same time. Once collected, a showdown takes place with Kruger, who manifests in a variety of gruesome forms.

Armed with an energy bar as well as a ZZZZ bar, players will combat giant rats, giant spiders, falling rocks and a number of other natural hazards until their ZZZZ bar depletes. You then flip into a spooky dream world, which features gigantic disembodied heads and those aforementioned clapping ghosts, where, in another nice touch, collecting a radio will then cause you to wake up and return to the real world.

We're still not too sure why the ultimate slasher flick was turned into a cutesy platformer, but at least Rare had the good sense not to include any bottom-bouncing attacks in it.





# DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?




DATAFILE

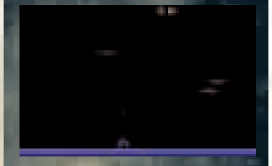
**NAME:** ROB FULOP
**DATE OF BIRTH:** 20/10/59
**FIRST JOB:** ATARI COIN-OP
**CURRENTLY:** ENTREPRENEUR
**FAVOURITE FILM:** THE STING

# ROB FULOP

HE BRAVELY CONVERTED ATARI COIN-OP FAVOURITES TO RUN ON THE HUMBLE VCS BEFORE SETTING UP IMAGIC TO TAKE ON HIS FORMER BOSSES AT THEIR OWN GAME. ROB FULOP WON AWARDS WITH DEMON ATTACK, COURTED CONTROVERSY WITH NIGHT TRAP AND WENT WALKIES TO THE BANK WITH DOGZ. PAUL DRURY LEARNS ABOUT MAGIC, MISSILES AND MECHS

YOU MUST PLAY...

**Demon Attack**
There's no lack of shooters on the VCS, but this does the left-right-fire thing with panache. The way the winged foes swirl into focus, split and then swoop is impressive and it's always touching that if you destroy one of a pair, the other will launch a kamikaze dive at your ship. It's relentless, though not as tough as Rob expected, "I couldn't imagine anyone getting to the end, but some kid managed it after the first weekend. I took out that one line of code that made it stop for the next manufacturing run." Can you beat Level 84 and do you have the original cart?



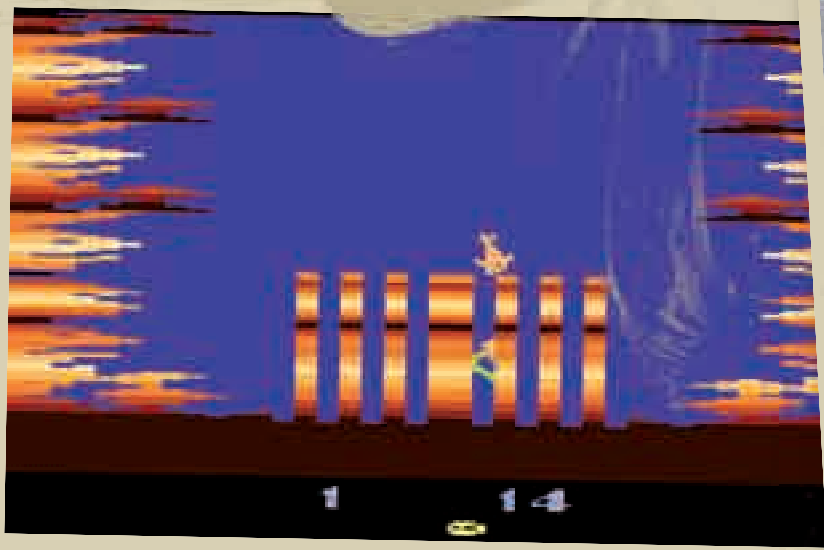
**"When I was little, I told people I was going to be a mathematician and a magician," begins fast-talking Californian Rob Fulop. "I spent my time at the library, by the shelves with the books of tricks and puzzles. That's kind of where I made my profession."**

Maths and magic. What a wonderful description of the world of videogame design. It was no surprise then that Rob took a summer job at Atari while studying Electrical Engineering at the University of California, and joined the pioneering company full-time after graduating in 1978.

That summer job was in the coin-op division, working on sound effects for pinball machines, but he was soon part of the rapidly growing home division. After visiting the famous Atari games room, he decided he could re-create its arcade hit *Night Driver* on the lowly VCS. Wasn't attempting a 3D game, while still getting to grips with the obtuse hardware a little ambitious, Rob?

"It was just a bunch of dots," he remembers. "Just a big puzzle. At Atari, if you made a game after six months that people liked, they kept you on. If not, they got rid of you. It was a survivalist kind of place. At that point, we were like individual authors writing short stories. You didn't have to convince anyone of what you wanted to do."

And so the young scribe decided to add his own flourishes to his next project, a conversion of *Space Invaders* for the Atari 400/800. Dispensing with barriers and including a striking, if largely superfluous, spaceship on the left of the screen, which marked the aliens' descent,




» Fathom, starring Ecco's granddad.




» Demon Attack got Imagic off to a flying start and earned Rob the Game Of The Year Award from *Billboard* magazine to boot.

Rob even managed to sneak in his initials, masquerading as redesigned invaders.

"That's kind of embarrassing now," he admits. "I was 22 and stupid. People just wanted to play the game they knew from the arcade and I was trying to be avant-garde. I vowed to make my next game as good a copy as I could."

True to his word, Rob volunteered to convert *Missile Command* for the 2600 and produced a remarkably accurate version given the limited hardware. The success may have been partly due to Rob being one of the few people able to cross the growing divide between Atari's consumer and coin-op divisions.

"Because I'd worked there doing the sound for *Superman* pinball, I didn't feel like an outsider. I had friends there and could go over when I wanted. I asked Dave [Theurer, the creator of the original *Missile Command*] how he did sound effects and stuff. He didn't give me any code but I copied what he said as best I could. He was pretty happy with how it came out."

**"I WAS ANGRY AT ATARI AND WANTED TO MAKE DEMON ATTACK SO GOOD, THEY'D CRY WHEN THEY SAW IT"** ROB ON SHOWING HIS OLD BOSSES WHAT THEY COULD'VE WON

Dave Theurer wasn't alone. The game sold over a million copies, making a fortune for Atari. As Christmas approached, Rob became suitably expectant at what his bonus from management might be.

"At that age, if they'd given me a car I would have stayed and probably have made them millions more dollars. I remember opening the envelope and it was a voucher for a free turkey. What a bunch of bozos," he says.

Understandably incensed, and with an eye on the success ex-Atari employees were having at Activision, Rob co-founded Imagic and produced one of the first major hits for the fledgling third-party publisher. *Demon Attack* appealed to a mainstream audience still hooked on space shooters, but had its own distinctive style. The smooth animation and vast array of swooping aliens earned it the accolade of *Billboard*'s Game Of The Year for 1983.

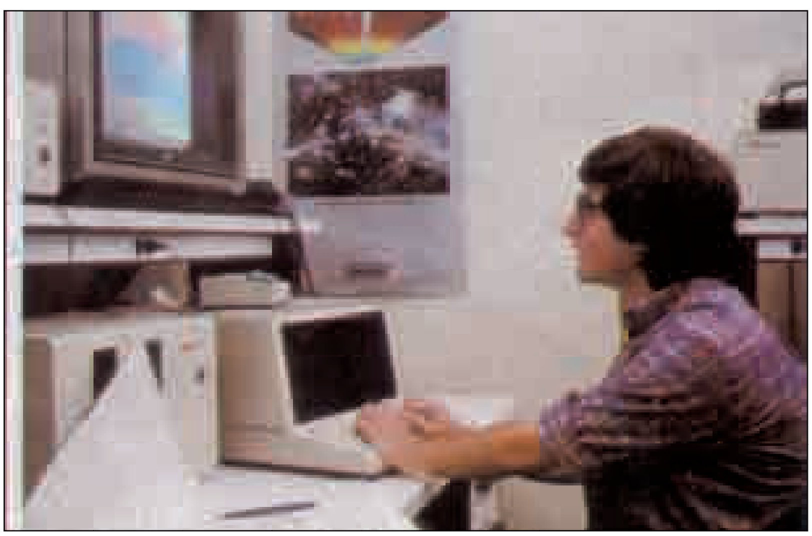
"I was angry at Atari and wanted to make something so good, they'd cry when they saw it. A lot of the best work is motivated by a desire to show someone what they've missed out on," he adds.

The huge sales of *Demon Attack* attracted enough jealously to prompt a legal challenge, due to the game's alleged similarity to *Phoenix* for which Atari owned the VCS rights. Yet Rob was tiring of writing 'death from above' games, as he neatly puts it. With *Cosmic Ark* he moved away from destruction and embraced conservation, as players were tasked with rescuing endangered species from the surface of numerous hostile planets.

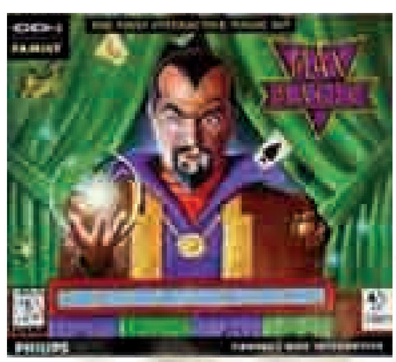
"That was my first good, original game," states Rob proudly, while noting that originality is not always what the buying public demand. "There's always that relationship between a creative person and their audience. The creative wants to push the envelope, not make the same thing over and over, but the audience wants three-chord rock 'n' roll."

Undeterred, Rob continued to explore new game concepts. *Cubicolor* was an ingenious little puzzle title produced over a two-month period in 1982 that was sadly never released (though Rob eventually put out 50 signed copies off his own back in the Nineties, making it a real collector's item – cartridges regularly change hands for over $1,000). He followed this with *Fathom*, an early attempt at a story-driven game, featuring a dolphin that could leap from the ocean waves, transform into a seagull and soar high above the sea.

"Michael Becker had drawn the dolphin jumping out of the water and it looked really cute, so we tried to make a little



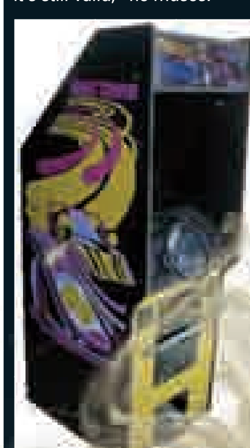
» Rob working his magic and hacking out the hits at Imagic.




» Harking back to his childhood dream of being a magician this is one of Rob's inventive CD-i titles, Max Magic.

## IN THE DARK

The incompetence of Atari's marketing department during the Warner years has been much bemoaned in these pages by former employees. Rob explains the fundamental problem, "No one back then knew if games were just a fad, so they got marketing people in who could sell soap or towels. They didn't play games, they didn't understand the business they were in and they thought adults that played videogames were weirdoes. One of the suits asked me where I got the idea for *Night Driver*. He'd never even seen the arcade game playing in the games room." Such astounding ignorance goes some way to explaining why management failed to recognise the central importance of retaining talented, creative programmers and felt that a free turkey at Christmas was adequate reward. "I got my voucher framed. I think it's still valid," he muses.





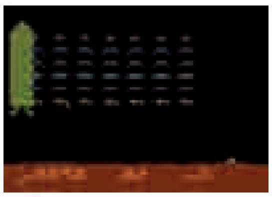
» *Cubicolor* mixed Rubik's Cube with a slide puzzle and now sells for over a grand…



» Rob's response to the controversial *Night Trap* was to create the hugely successful *Dogz*



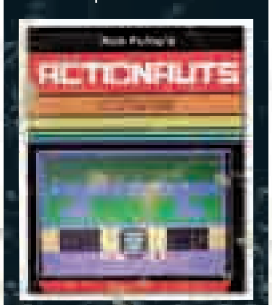
» Virtual pets? Now there's an idea with legs. Sorry.



» *Space Invaders* for the Atari 400/800. Rob even managed to sneak his initials, horizontally, into the bottom two rows.

## ROBOT LOVE

Before leaving Atari, Rob had begun a fourth title. "I'd done three arcade clones and was trying to make something new, but it's hard to do an original game on the 2600. It was kind of dodge ball in outer space and it didn't really work, but I still wish I had a copy," he says. Thankfully, Rob did hang on to the code he worked on after his departure from Imagic. Robots were big in both senses in 1984, and his VCS title *'Actionauts'* tasked you with programming a giant mech to navigate a series of mazes in search of, erm, cheese. The game was never released, though some of its interesting ideas did make it into an expanded C64 version. Collectors rejoice – Rob is now offering a limited run of the lost 2600 cartridge via his website. Visit www.robfulop.com to place an order, read more on the story of the game and generally admire the full scope of Mr Fulop's illustrious career.




fairy tale around it. We were exploring the platform, pushing what it could do. It was part of me trying to discover myself as a creative person. Of course, as a businessman, I should have made '*Demon Attack 2*'," he admits.

The commercial realities of the industry were about to catch up with the once buoyant Imagic. The company had to pull back from going public after being crippled by the infamous videogames crash. Rob parted company with Imagic, which limped on until its ultimate demise in 1986, and as the console industry collapsed around him, he shrewdly moved into an emerging area of computer game development. He coded *Rabbit Jack's Casino* for AOL, and so, can be credited with bringing together gambling and online gaming, a pairing that would prove to be rather fruitful.

It wasn't to be the last time that Rob saw the way that Windows was blowing. He used his substantial royalty cheque to found his own company, which after some interesting forays into interactive advertising, saw him teaming up with Tom Zito and industry legend Steve Russell (author of *Spacewar!*, usually credited as the first-ever computer game) on another new concept – the movie game.

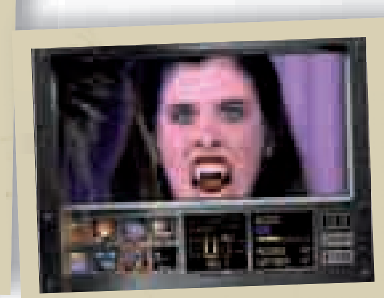
"We made this little demo of a murder mystery called '*Scene Of The Crime*'," Rob recalls. "We were trying to learn how to put together a movie and a game as no one had done it before. We had four tracks of video running at the same time and the machine could pick one of them depending on what the user did. A special box sat between your VCR and the TV, but Hasbro never put it into production. People were excited when they saw it, but there wasn't that much you could do with it. It was just video tape branching and with 20 minutes of tape, how many times could you replay the thing? It was a very linear and limited experience and, clearly, nowhere near as interactive as playing a videogame, but it was clear something big was coming with CD technology."

**"I'D BEEN THINKING ABOUT COMPUTER PETS FOR TEN YEARS, BUT THERE WAS NO REAL PLATFORM FOR THAT UNTIL THE WINDOWS OPERATING SYSTEM"** ROB ON HIS NEXT MOVE AFTER THE NIGHT TRAP CONTROVERSY

So the project, including video for a sci-fi shooter called *Sewer Shark* and a B-movie vampire pastiche called *Night Trap*, was bundled into a crate to gather dust for the next five years.



» *Sewer Shark* pioneered the use of full-motion video on the Sega CD, but began as a project for Hasbro's unreleased NEMO system.



» *Night Trap*, apparently the great corruptor of America's youth.

Meanwhile, Rob followed his hunch and got involved with Philips and its CD-i adventure. He demonstrated some impressive out-of-the-box thinking with *Third Degree*, a game of moral dilemmas – "A favourite? Your wife's friend catching you at the porno shop" – and *Max Magic*, which revisited his childhood love of stage magic and let you become the sorcerer's apprentice. Good ideas with a sadly limited audience, but just as Rob's new setup, PF Magic, looked to move into 3DO development, everyone suddenly knew his name. *Night Trap* had been resurrected for the Mega-CD, and due to some cheap politics by an ambitious Senator on a righteous crusade against the supposed corrupting influence of videogames on 'our precious children', it was branded as the epitome of evil and frequently referenced in the ensuing Senate hearings.

"I was hauled in to give talks about it," explains Rob. "There was a lot of misinformation and it was very unfairly dumped on. Senator Lieberman jumped on it. Politicians are always looking for a cause that'll get them a lot of press without pissing off too many people. It was kind of embarrassing for me, though. Even Captain Kangaroo was saying this thing I'd made was bad. It made me want to make something so cute and adorable people would have to shut up."

Rob's ethical retort was 1995's *Dogz*. "I'd been thinking about computer pets for ten years, but there was no real platform for that until the Windows operating system. It wasn't something you loaded up and played, it was something you had there while you were doing other stuff."

Using the graphics engine that PF Magic had developed for fighting game *Ballz*, its puppy simulator was hugely successful and, along with Tamagotchi, spearheaded the whole nurture-'em-up genre. *Catz* followed and the steady flow of cash from the virtual pet franchise allowed Rob to take things easy for a while. "I didn't have to work, I got married, I kind of upgraded my life," he says. "Then I got bored, so last year, I started to work on casual, downloadable games. I think my next project will be a game inside that whole social networking space that Facebook and MySpace have created. Something around the way people flirt with each other."

Rob Fulop – still feeling the love three decades on.



# ROB FULOP DESERT ISLAND DISKS




## QIX ARCADE

1 It's just such an addictive game, so non-representational. I like abstract games and this works really well. It doesn't pretend to be anything other than what it is. It's just geometry.



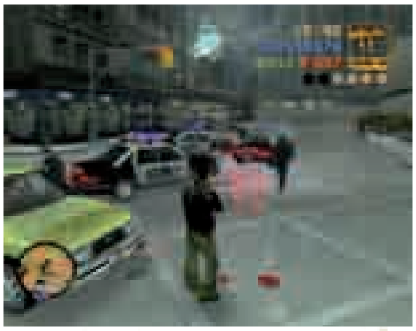
## MISSILE COMMAND ARCADE

2 One of the most beautiful things about *Missile Command*, the thing that brings me back to it time and again, is that you don't have to be *accurate* when firing off the missiles. Getting 'close' is good enough, because the expanding explosions of your ICBMs destroy any oncoming missiles nearby. I love that!



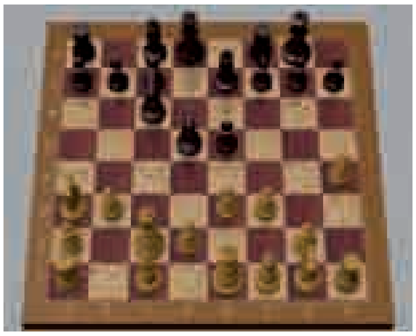
## POKER PC

3 I don't mind which version. Basically, your cards are your 'secrets', and you try to keep them from each other for as long as you can. Cards are great for online play. They still work even if you can't see your opponent's face, though it is second best to playing in person.



## GTA III PLAYSTATION

4 There's something satisfying about being the bad guy for once. Sort of dream-like. And then when you eventually lose, which is about 99 per cent of the time, you are punished for your crimes… as it should be. It's always disconcerting to play the part of the hero in a game, and lose. Everybody knows that 'good conquers evil', so when you lose a game in the role of the good guy, the story is sort of busted.



## CHESS PC

5 Has there ever been a better game? You can play all your life and never find yourself in a situation you were in before. It's like every game is its own unique story and there are an infinity of stories available. All this from a cheap paper board and 32 plastic playing pieces. Such occurs to me as an incomprehensible value. Little wonder the game took 1,000 years to design!



## THE SIMS PC

6 It's about building stuff, like Lego. It feels virtually endless, like you could create scenarios forever.



## SUPER MARIO BROS 3 NES

7 I'd want a really good *Mario* game on my island and I think this is probably the best. Again, the beauty of the *Mario World* games is that they are so dream-like. I've always felt that if I have to hang out in cyberspace, experiencing 'virtual reality', it should be as dream-like as possible. I mean if I want reality, I can just walk out my front door.



## PACK OF PLAYING CARDS

8 The top designer at Hasbro, George Dempsey, once said that if you gave every kid in a neighbourhood a rollercoaster, except one, who you gave a soccer ball to that would be the most popular kid after two weeks. With a ball, you can entertain 20 kids forever, and that's why I'd take cards. With those 52 bits of card you can play a huge number of games.

> ROB FULOP

# MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE



**Merman: *Demon Attack* appeared on a wide range of the 8-bit machines. How closely involved were you in the conversions to these machines?**
I did the original on the VCS but wasn't really involved in the conversions. I consulted on the Intellivision one but that was all. I looked at them and moved on to the next game.

**Mayhem: How much of the legal wrangling between Atari and Imagic over *Phoenix* versus *Demon Attack* did you witness?**
I was kept out of a lot of that. It was basically a silly hustling and political thing. I think I went to one deposition, that was it. It was a business deal, all done behind closed doors. No one really cared too much about it.

**Yakmag: Were you involved in the filming of the video footage for the CD-i and Sega CD titles?**
I was on the set and did the casting. I didn't direct but I was there for every shot. *Sewer Shark* was done by John Dykstra at Apogee – he did the effects for the first *Star Wars* movie. It was all-new to me and I was fascinated by it. I'd talk to the director every night about what we were shooting tomorrow and learned a lot. I was trying to make sure everything they shot was the right technical spec, but I wasn't directing the actors. Was I there when they shot Dana Plato topless for *Night Trap*? I think something like that may have been shot, but I don't think it ever made it into the game. And no, I wasn't on the set for that one.

**Paranoid Marvin: *Cosmic Ark* has an impressively sized player-controlled mothership, but where did the inspiration for this spacecraft come from? *ET*, perhaps?**
No, not *ET* or *Close Encounters*. It came from a Bally coin-op called *Space Zap*. I got the basic play pattern from that, and a big flying saucer was just something that I could easily build out of playfield blocks.

**Pantal00ns: Did you envisage the *Dogz* and *Catz* franchise's being so popular? And did you think they'd still be alive and kicking on current platforms today? Would you like to think they were the inspiration for the popular Tamagotchi?**
I thought that once *Dogz* started doing really well, it would be a forever franchise and be on every computer system. Having a puppy is a natural thing. I think Tamagotchi was parallel to it. A lot of people were thinking in that area, but *Dogz* was the first that really made it.

**Tssk: Where did you get the inspiration for those creatures in *Cosmic Ark*? And how the hell did you pull off the star field in the space section?**
I worked with Michael Becker on those and he's responsible for most of the designs. We wrote a little graphics editor and there's actually not that many designs that work on an eight-by-eight grid. While I was doing *Missile Command*, I stumbled on the bug that gave you the star field. You could screw around with the register and the star would replicate itself all over the screen and blink. No one understood how it worked or why it was there, but I planned to use it one day.

**Northway: What was it like to experience the big videogame crash from the inside?**
It was a gradual thing. I left Imagic and tried to get some 2600 development work. I started doing *Mr Do's Castle* for Parker Bros. I had a contract with them for two months, but the whole business was slowly crashing. I realised I wasn't going to get work doing VCS games so I drifted into computers and online games. I decided they were the future. I was a little too… well, I wasn't too late with that idea.

**Cafeman: What's your take on people still making 2600 homebrew games?**
I think it's great but no, I don't play them. It's a technical challenge to make anything work. There was a bunch of us who knew the hardware and share tricks, but on your own, man, that must be hard.

**The Master: Who is your favourite Dr Who?**
[laughs] I've never even watched it, or heard of it, in my life! Is it very popular in England?

For your chance to quiz future castaways please visit the **Retro Gamer** forums at www.retrogamer.net/forum

eMag

# ET: The Extra Terrestrial

retro shamer

FOLLOWING HIS LOOK BACK AT LAST BATTLE, STUART HUNT DECIDES TO CUT HIS FINGER ON THE DADDY OF DIRE, BUT INSTEAD OF BOTHERING HIM FOR ONE OF THOSE PINKY-TO-PINKY BAND-AID TOUCHES, HE OPTS TO LOP IT OFF USING A RUSTY SPOON

## IN THE KNOW



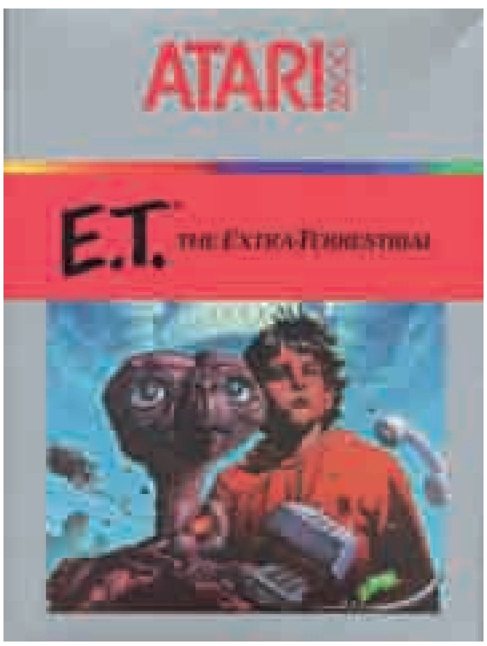
» **PUBLISHER:** IN-HOUSE

» **DEVELOPER:** ATARI

» **RELEASED:** 1982

» **GENRE:** POTHOLING

» **WHY PLAY THIS WHEN YOU CAN PLAY:** ANY OTHER GAME IF WE'RE BEING BRUTALLY HONEST




## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Okay, well the box art to *ET* looks pretty good; it has a cool comic book feel. Check out the expression of worry on the faces of both ET and Elliott. We reckon Elliot's saying, 'As soon as this game hits the stands we're toast, is there any room for me in your spaceship?' ET's saying 'Not a chance flesh bag, get a decent haircut.' ET's got a nasty paper cut on his index finger that looks like it's turning septic, and bits of telephone are floating around as if ET was a magician. Check the ominous faceless entities behind them, too; we guess they are supposed to represent the scientists that dress like explorers. And that giant faded dome in the sky must represent ET's ride.



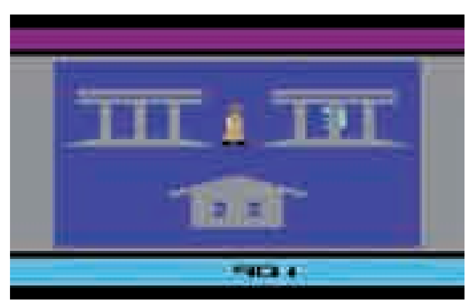
» There's nothing nicer than a bowl of ET soup.

**It takes a special kind of badness to be buried in the middle of the desert under a ton of sand. If what cinema feeds us is correct, then this type of disposal is usually saved for things that people never want found, with all traces of their existence wiped away permanently. If there was ever a game that deserved such treatment, then *ET* would be it.**

This game not only killed the Atari 2600, it pretty much killed the entire videogame industry in North America – no small feat, one tiny game undoing all that hard work. But it was a movie tie-in after all – perhaps the only thing on God's green Earth that's capable of creating so much collateral damage.

If we're honest, the problem with *ET* is everything. There are plenty of iconic sections from the movie that Atari could have taken and developed into a videogame: for example, the scene where Elliot is being chased by the police and escapes magically into the air with ET perched in his shopping basket – surely that would have made a half-decent *Gradius*-style shooter. Even a game that had you controlling Drew Barrymore picking fancy-dress items to put on your ET sprite would have proved a better call than what Atari would ultimately roll with.

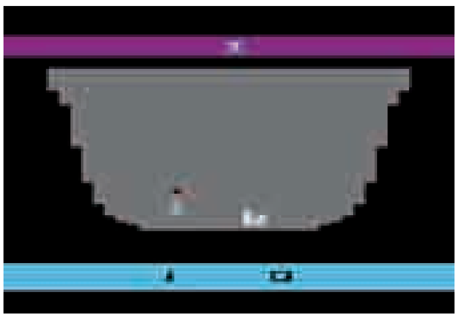
Do you think *ET* would have done nearly as well as it did at the box office, if the film had been about an alien dropping into 50ft potholes to reclaim pieces of telephone? Well, that's the strange made-up premise that Atari decided to build its game around. It's not difficult to spot the wafer-thin film connection – he's looking for these pieces so that he can phone home, and while it's



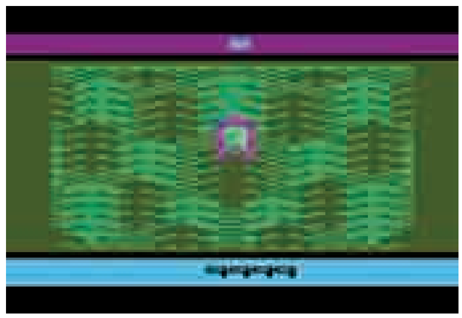
» "Look Hoskins, I've told you, I don't know who framed Roger Rabbit."



» The collision detection is awful. We've actually been caught by the miner-dressed scientist in this particular screenshot.



» If you die, you turn white and an 'El-li-ott' will drop down the 50ft chasm and revive you. Cheers pal!



» The game's dramatic introduction: ET lands on Earth in some kind of strange-looking gazebo. Naturally.

a bit risky to assume that a broken phone that's been festering in a pit would still work, let alone contact aliens, this is the whole moronic theme that the entire game is based around.

*ET* is basically a game about falling into holes and getting back out of them, and somehow it manages to split that whole idea into two sections. The first finds you avoiding capture from guys dressed like Humphrey Bogart across screens littered with black holes. And the second, involves you falling into these dark pixilated voids to investigate whether or not a piece of phone is inside. To get back out, ET has to perform this strange neck-extending move. It looks ridiculous, and takes almost the entire length of the movie to get him to finally reach ground level. Failure to prevent ET from doing his levitating neck trick at the exact point that he reaches the top of the pit, will result in him infuriatingly dropping back to the ground, leaving you to repeat the whole demoralising process again. Sometimes, just to offer a bit of variety, instead of finding a piece of phone you'll occasionally encounter a dead flower, which ET can bring back to life – great!

If you successfully collect the three phone pieces that are scattered around the game's six screens your reward is seeing ET's mummy and daddy dropping to Earth in their spaceship and taking away his allowance for reversing the charges and being such a bad little alien.

retro shamer

## POINTLESS PART



As this is effectively the whole game, it can't really be classified as a pointless 'part'. But to fine-tune a point, falling into a pit to breathe life in to a dead flower must rank as more pointless than falling in to a pit to collect a phone part. It doesn't happen often, but when it does you'll get very angry. You see, finding a phone piece edges you ever closer to the end of the game, but finding a dead flower does not. So while it might allow you to feel like Jesus for a few seconds, it's no substitute for getting you to the end of this horrible game quicker.

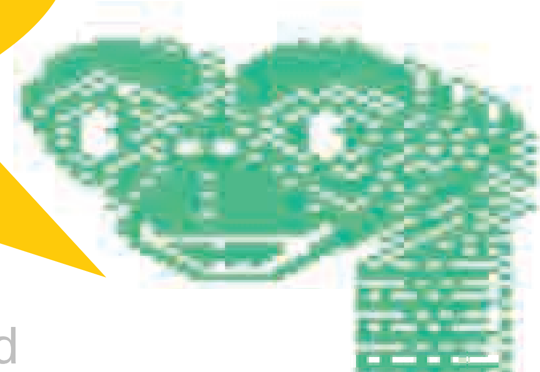
It's a nice sugary dream, but, sadly, we all know how the real ending played out. Atari received so many cartridges from extremely perplexed and miffed 2600 owners that it was reputed to have dumped the whole lot into a landfill site in Mexico. So, unless ET was a sand-dwelling Mexican we guess he never did find home.



» If you get caught by these guys they imprison you in Athens for some strange reason.

[ A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR ]

Help, I'm still alive. If anyone can hear me, I'm buried in a desert in Mexico. Please bring a spade and dig me out. Look, you've seen *War Of The Worlds*, right? If you don't come to my rescue I'm going to send loads of those nasty big tripods to come and spray lava over your homes. And don't think Tom Cruise will save you this time. What's that, Matt Damon? Listen up, you may have looked like a tough guy in *The Bourne Supremacy*, but do you really think martial arts and a ballpoint pen are a match for a laser cannon? Look, I'm sorry humans. I don't know what just came over me. It's this scorching heat, it's messing with my head. Please forgive my outburst… El-li-ott, Spielberg, Anyone?



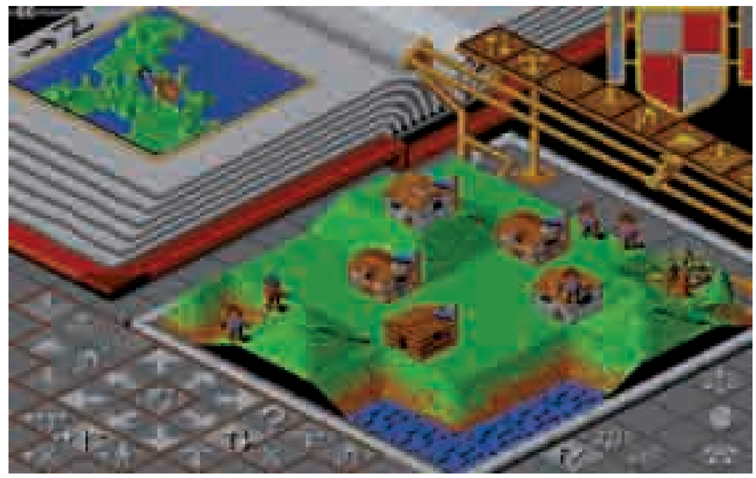
"ET NOT ONLY KILLED THE ATARI 2600, IT PRETTY MUCH KILLED THE ENTIRE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY IN THE US"

THE MAKING OF...

# POPULOUS

Back in the Eighties it seemed like Bullfrog was going nowhere, with a couple of average titles doing little to enhance its reputation. However, the arrival of Populous changed the fortunes of the company for the better, as Kim Wild discovers





## IN THE KNOW



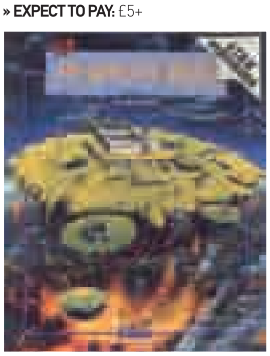
» **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS

» **DEVELOPER:** BULLFROG PRODUCTIONS

» **RELEASED:** 1989

» **GENRE:** SIMULATION

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



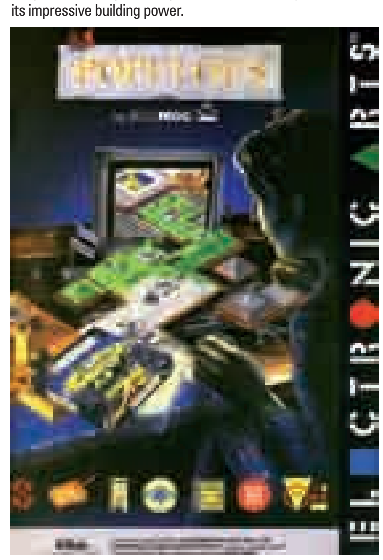
**It seems inconceivable now, knowing Bullfrog's pedigree of classic games spanning over 15 years, but its early future was an uncertain prospect.** The firm had finished the unsuccessful database program 'Acquisition' and its foray into the world of games programming consisted of the *Druid II* port. All seemed lost, until Les Edgar, one of Bullfrog's co-founders, came across the first seed for a world simulation.

"I came into the office one morning and noticed that our recently-employed-to-draw-stuff graphic artist Glenn Corpes was messing about with a cool 3D landscape which he could modify in real-time. We put it on ice, however, as we had still to finish *Druid* and sort the never-ending torrent of Acquisition problems," says Les. Glenn Corpes recalls that this landscape generator came about as a result of uncertain job security. "After the first two games hadn't even brought in enough money to pay the wages, it seemed to me like Bullfrog was going nowhere," says Glenn. "Everyone else was back working on the business software and I was wondering what to do with myself while waiting to lose my job, so I brought my Atari ST in and played with porting *Fusion* from the Amiga. I got distracted by the idea of isometric blocks and got so engrossed in this that I worked all weekend on it. I quickly ran into the problem that although I had a set of blocks I could draw in random positions on the screen, I couldn't really see if they looked any good or not without some test-level data."

"If I was less of a lazy bastard I'd have written a level editor, but being more into instant gratification, I wrote a really dodgy landscape generator instead," continues Glenn. "This worked by raising a point of the landscape, moving to another random point nearby and doing it again a few thousand times. The results were too spiky to be called a landscape, so I made it possible to raise and lower the land with the mouse in the hope that it would look more like a landscape. It didn't, but when the rest of the guys came in on Monday morning, you could scroll around, raising and lowering the land."

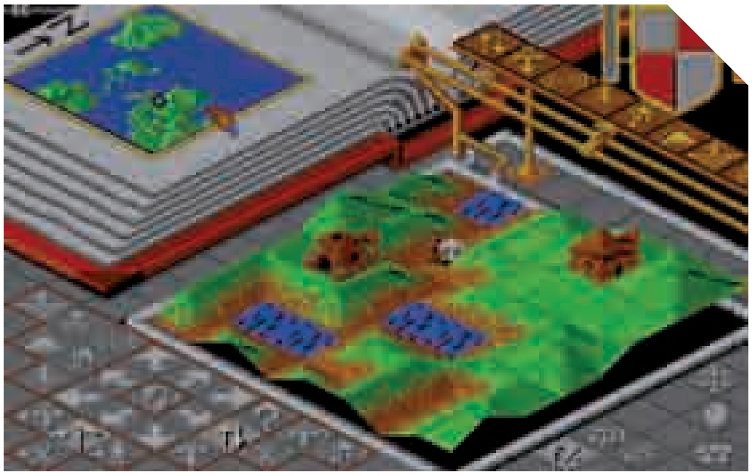
However, there needed to be more to *Populous*, and it was at this point that some kind of game needed to be introduced. This is where Peter Molyneux, Bullfrog's other co-founder, played a crucial role. "At this point I had no idea of what game might go with this system, but Peter was inspired and after just a few days of playing with it, he had people building settlements and fighting," explains Glenn. "There were severe limitations to the amount of flat land my generator created and the tools to modify the landscape were cool for creating more. The way Peter's settlement code exploited this

» A promotional flyer for *Populous*, demonstrating its impressive building power.





**»** Of course, everything you can do, the opposition can do, too. Here the red camp build their forces.

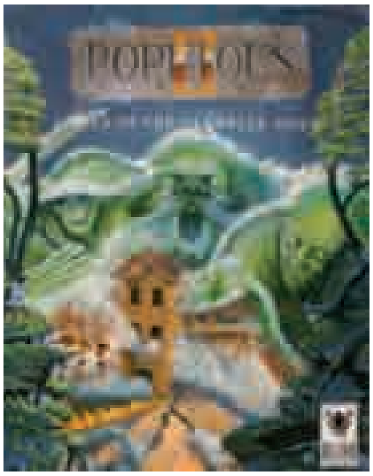


**»** It doesn't look all that exciting but have patience. The world will soon grow.

resource was a work of genius. I am a firm believer in the idea that technical limitations are often a good thing rather than a problem."

The close partnership between the two would result in a working relationship that would span years and prove a source of inspiration. "He's one of the few people that ever taught me anything about programming and he really believes in what he's doing," admits Glenn. "By the time *Populous* was in development we were both living and breathing it. At one point Peter had a hard drive failure, there was no backup of his code and he rewrote two months of game logic in a week or so."

**»** *Populous II* added lots of ideas, but was essentially the same game under a different setting.



Throughout the seven months of development (which cost £20,000, including the add-on pack, according to Les) Glenn and Peter would spend countless days playing the game against each other to iron out any bugs and to create the network mode. *Populous* was one of the earliest to have multiplayer over a network, although the frame rate and slow internet access meant it was slow to play. Its serial link-up was superb, though, allowing Amiga and Atari ST gamers to compete against each other with the correct cable.

Les saw the potential for the game to make use of a popular licence. "I contacted Lego as I thought the 'block building' approach would suit a Lego licence. They weren't interested as they said they wouldn't support 'violent' games!" he remembers. "After a few months, however, it transpired that to make a true world simulator, you would need a database bigger than Acquisition and that with too many options the gamer would get frustrated and confused. We decided to keep it simple – less is more and all that. In the essence of truly great games such as chess, there are a limited number of pieces and a limit to what you can do with them. We applied this to *Populous*."

Anyone who has played *Populous* will contest that it is a bewildering experience to start with, with a multitude of icons at the bottom of the screen and very little indication of what the objective is. It's only after a few hours of play that things start to click and conquering your rival becomes second nature. The isometric view that generated interest was inspired by Paul Shirley's wonderful *Spindizzy* on the Amstrad CPC. "If you look at the placement of the main isometric view on screen in *Populous*, it's in exactly the same place," explains Glenn. "The palette was stolen from FTL's *Dungeon Master* as it was an inspired use of 16 colours, so much so that several Amiga reviews said 'it's nice to see a game that isn't just using ported ST graphics', even though it was."

For all its features and originality, Glenn concedes that many aspects came about due to laziness rather than grand design. "The computer opponent was designed specifically to beat me and is, in fact, very simple," he says. "It basically looks for settled buildings and tries to expand them into bigger settlements using the same 'raise point' method a human player would. It also randomly decides to save up for an effect, then simply attacks the leader, or the oldest building. The only thing you could do to the people was tell them to either walk to the leader,

## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

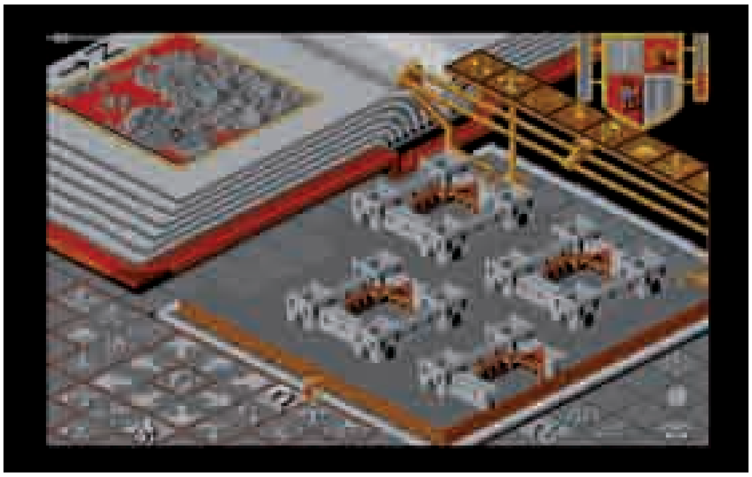
**POWERMONGER**
SYSTEM: PC, ATARI ST, AMIGA, MEGA DRIVE, SNES, SHARP X68000, PC-ENGINE
YEAR: 1990

**SYNDICATE** (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: PC, MAC, AMIGA, MEGA DRIVE, CD32
YEAR: 1993

**THEME PARK**
SYSTEM: PC, MAC, AMIGA, SNES, MEGA DRIVE, PLAYSTATION, SATURN, 3DO, ATARI JAGUAR, SEGA MEGA CD
YEAR: 1994



**»** The castle is the ultimate form of defence.



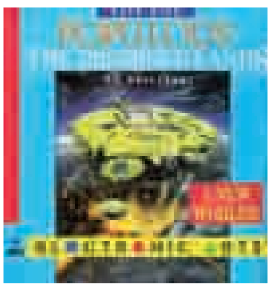
**»** "A knight that was out of your control would head for the enemy's oldest settlement, fighting anything he met," says Glenn.



# POPULOUS

## ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND

While a sequel would follow further down the line, Glenn Corpes and Peter Molyneux released an expansion pack to tide fans over until the follow-up made its appearance. The data disk, which was written very quickly, added five new worlds: Wild West, Silly Land, Block Land, Révolution Française and Bit Plains, as well as a map editor. "The data disk graphics were done in two weeks flat by me and a couple of trainees while Peter was on holiday," says Glenn. "When he got back he knocked up a new level file in a couple of days, although this was tweaked as EA tested the game. It was possibly unique, as it was released on a dual format ST/Amiga disk." The second disk, *Final Frontier* added a huge total of 500 new levels, and was given away as a cover mount on *The One* Amiga magazine. Those, indeed, were the days.



look for enemies to fight or look for friends to join with and people would always settle if they could. This was shoddy programming masquerading as subtleties of AI, a technique used by a million game coders before and since."

Yet despite the fact that *Populous* was a joint effort between Peter and Glenn, there were also notable contributions from other members of the team. "I recall that some specific contributions by me were the addition of the heartbeat sound to give a sense of urgency to proceedings," comments Les on his role as designer. "Also the general sound effects to give atmospheric feel to the game – this was one of the first games to do this in this way."

"A major gameplay problem we encountered was how to finish a game," admits Les. "Where you have a game that is indirectly controlled, you can only influence gameplay rather than directly determine it. The issue is that you cannot force the two opposing factions to fight very easily. I came up with the idea of the Papal Magnet. This enabled you to direct your followers to specific destinations in the world. Once they arrived, the AI took over and if there was an opposing faction nearby, they would fight. You used this to colonise the map and to engage the opposite side when you felt you had sufficient followers to overcome the others and when your 'mana' was sufficiently high enough to give power to use your special effects. This way, the game could be brought to a conclusion."

*Populous* proved to be the making of Bullfrog. Aside from receiving glowing reviews, (*Zzap!64*, *CU Amiga*, *The One* and many others scored the game in the mid-90s) it was commercially popular. Such unexpected success enabled Bullfrog to move offices to the Surrey Research Park, a building with plenty of facilities to house an ever-expanding company. Noticing the popularity of the game, Les used his business acumen to licence the game out to other developers including Imagineer, a Japanese developer working with Nintendo. Bullfrog was one of the few Western companies to achieve commercial success in Japan, a feat that has only been repeated by a few developers since.

All in all, *Populous* was converted to PC-Engine, Game Boy, SNES, Mega Drive, Master System, Sharp X68000 and FM Town; all varied in quality but proved to be good sellers, with sales topping 3 million across all formats. Peter programmed the PC release alone, while Glenn wrote some routines to make the game work with different video modes including CGA, VGA and EGA. The Game Boy edition was a favourite of Glenn's, based on a screen he created on what the game should look like, while the SNES game was

> "WITH TOO MANY OPTIONS THE GAMER WOULD GET FRUSTRATED AND CONFUSED… SO WE DECIDED TO KEEP IT SIMPLE – LESS IS MORE AND ALL THAT" LES EDGAR



» The SNES version hosts impressive graphics and is surprisingly simple to control with a joypad.



» Wiping out the opposition with Armageddon is a quick and easy way to win.



» Raising land is therauputic and particularly pleasing during snowfall.



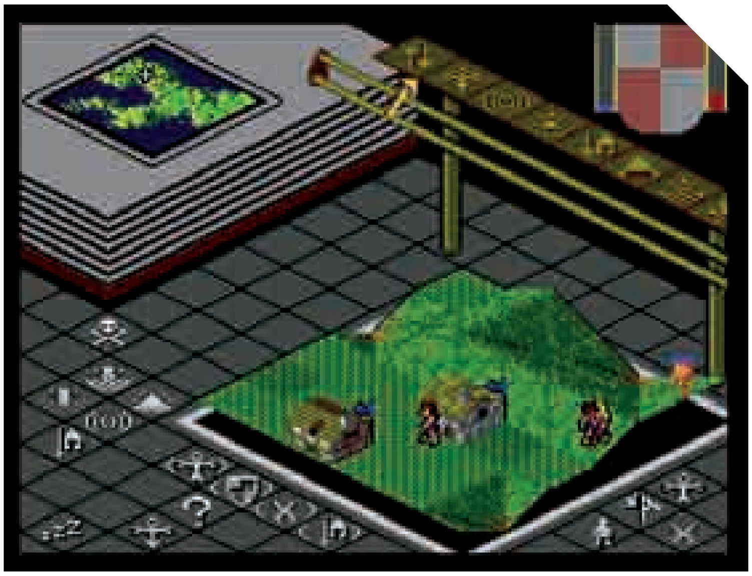
» Wreak havoc on your enemy's communities with various God-like powers.

excellent, with plenty of button shortcuts to be playable with a joypad. The Mega Drive release was a decent game, but suffered from major slowdown and control difficulties.

*Populous II* carried on the concept, placing the world under the rule of the Olympian Gods with improved visuals, extra powers and more strategic levels to conquer. Understandably, Glenn favoured the original game that he had worked very hard on. "I prefer *Populous*," he admits. "I think *Pop II* was over complicated, I never knew if I was saving up for the best effect for the job and that was just confusing. I also think the graphics in the original were better as *Populous II* only had two extremely talented graphic artists working on it for a year while the original was almost entirely done by me in a few months of breaks from programming." Despite its similarity, *Populous II* sold over a million copies, leading to several expansion packs and a third game some years later.

» Amstrad CPC fans take note: *Spindizzy*'s isometric style was replicated for the viewpoint in *Populous*.



» Upon encountering a rival, a fight will take place for occupancy of the settlement.

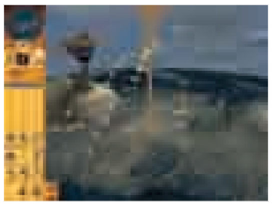
## "I AM A FIRM BELIEVER IN THE IDEA THAT TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS ARE OFTEN A GOOD THING RATHER THAN A PROBLEM" GLENN CORPES

After the string of *Populous* games, Glenn worked on many Bullfrog titles, such as *Powermonger*, *Flood* and *Magic Carpet*, while Les remained at the business helm, carrying out many of the behind-the-scenes decisions. Glenn remained at Bullfrog for some time after the EA takeover, but eventually left to set up his own development team. "Four years after [the takeover], the place had changed, teams were getting huge, managers had been brought in from outside, most of the people that had made Bullfrog had left for Mucky Foot and Lionhead," he recalls. "It seemed like the time was ripe for more original games developed by a tight, enthusiastic team so we set up Lost Toys. We lasted nearly five years and one of our games, *Battle Engine Aquila*, was, I think, the best I've ever worked on." After Lost Toys closed, Glenn formed Weirdwood, concentrating on online-distributed games. Les was vice president of EA for a while, where he helped build a campus facility to enable the Bullfrog development team to merge with EA, but he left soon after its completion to invest in other opportunities.

As a final tribute to the company that brought them so much success, which game remains most memorable? "I loved *Populous*, but probably my favourite was *Theme Park*," remarks Les. Glenn admits, "*Magic Carpet* for the technology, *Syndicate* for the gameplay, but, for all round pride in just being involved, *Populous*."

## A WHOLE NEW BEGINNING

The third game (*The Beginning*) was developed by a new team. Despite this, it invokes favourable reactions from Les and Glenn. "*Populous III* was a cool game. We wanted to take the game to the ultimate 3D experience for this sort of game. I think the zooming in and out mechanism was great, but confusing at times. It was a fitting end to one of the great milestones in gaming. All of Bullfrog's offerings were based on the God-sim concept and pretty much took chunks of their concepts from *Populous*," says Les. "I thought it was great, but not really *Populous*. I loved the pseudo-spherical world, a lovely trick. My only involvement was the design of the very weird landscape-texture generator," adds Glenn.



» This doesn't look like the best place to set up home.



» This is a healthy looking settlement, although we wouldn't fancy its chances against a flood.



THE MAKING OF...

# FORT APOCALYPSE

Fort Apocalypse: part Defender, part Chopper Rescue, but all Synapse classic. Craig Grannell interviews creator Steve Hales about his game's genesis and how publisher demands eliminated 96 per cent of his original design

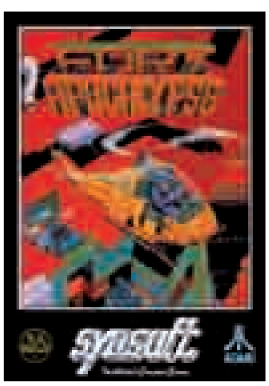






## IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** SYNSOFT
» **DEVELOPER:** SYNAPSE SOFTWARE
» **RELEASED:** 1982
» **GENRE:** ARCADE
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+




**Cast your mind back to the early Eighties. Suspiciously powerful fictitious vehicles were all the rage, from Michael Knight's pompous Trans Am in *Knight Rider*, to high-tech helicopters in the likes of *Blue Thunder* and *Airwolf*.** Unsurprisingly, the bug made its way to the videogames scene around the same time, and a rash of licensed and original souped-up helicopter games found their way to home systems, ranging from the obscure – Ocean's little-known and underrated *Helikopter Jagd* – to the near-ubiquitous, in the form of Dan Gorlin's *Choplifter*. Somewhere in the middle lay *Fort Apocalypse*; something of a cult classic, this hard-as-nails two-level arcade game echoes the rescue element of *Choplifter* (a game that it's often wrongly accused of being a clone of), and adds an exploration angle, tasking the player with blasting through caverns and infiltrating a highly dangerous underground Kralthan prison.

"I was a child of the Seventies," begins programmer Steve Hales, remembering how his creation came to be. "The memory of the failed Iranian helicopter mission in 1979 to rescue American hostages was very vivid. I'm completely convinced that's why I chose both choppers and a rescue motif for my game." Steve remembers waking up one morning, probably in 1981, with the game fully formed in his mind. "I sketched it all down, forgot about it, and then picked it up again when I was looking for game ideas," he says. This gap enabled Gorlin's *Choplifter* to sneak out first, and lazy journos cried foul when *Fort Apocalypse* eventually appeared, but Steve's influences lay elsewhere. "*Choplifter* and *Fort* were created and imagined at almost the same time. I'm pretty sure Dan Gorlin was inspired by similar themes – he and I were close in age," explains Steve, who admits that he was annoyed that he stopped working on *Fort* to finish another game (*Slime*), but philosophically notes: "Things all worked out in the end."

Instead, Steve's inspiration came from the arcades. Games such as *Defender*, *Chopper Rescue* and *Scramble* all made an impression on Steve as he fashioned his game: "Those titles gave me the freedom to think in terms of environments, and to work out what was possible. *Scramble* and *Defender* presented the larger-than-screen world, and the reveal – anticipation – was part of the fun. I wanted to re-create that in my own games." From there, Steve recalls that *Fort Apocalypse* evolved in three stages: "First, I created the movement of the chopper. Next, I wrote a level editor and started building levels. Finally, a month or two was spent



» Distracted by the aggression of the robo-chopper, our hero didn't realise he was about to fly into solid rock.



» Flying past the stranded captives, it was clear our protagonist hadn't grasped the concept of this 'rescue' lark.

tweaking the levels and trying to figure out how to squeeze the game into 16 KB."

With *Fort Apocalypse* rapidly becoming a tough, otherworldly game, getting the controls right was key. The final release offers a helicopter with some 'weight' behind it, but one that can still stop quickly, which is rather important when you're piloting the thing underground. "I did have a philosophy about how the game would be played," explains Steve. "I wanted to design a game that was impossible to do in real life – for me, fun was the most important part, and I was not concerned with emulating reality." As Steve notes, this alone sets the game apart from *Choplifter* – after all, people don't tend to fly helicopters underground. "Therefore, the controls were very clear: directional movement, and fire to shoot, all influenced by gravity."

Steve's way of thinking – a gaming environment that was somehow both entirely at odds with the real world, and yet still somewhat grounded in reality – continued through to the various foes and obstacles populating the underground complex. These include swiftly moving and aggressive ground-based tanks, robo-choppers that fire wildly while homing in on the player's helicopter, various moving barriers, teleporters and lasers, and a barrage of deadly floating mines. "My original sketches had the caves and enemy choppers, but the mines were added later to solve a problem," explains Steve. "With a lot of open space, you couldn't see things move. The moving barriers were there as a way to trick the player, while the teleporters just seemed fun, and were probably borrowed from *Asteroids*." Another nod to a classic arcade game also made an appearance once Steve decided how the various destructible barriers would be destroyed by the chopper's weaponry: they are shot away, block-by-block – a conceit likely borrowed from *Breakout*.

With the gameplay elements dealt with, Steve dressed his game in suitably chunky and military presentation. A large, stocky typeface provides an indication of score, fuel level and the ever-decreasing bonus, while the word 'Navatron' proudly sits beneath the long-range radar, which Steve claims was in his original sketches, and primarily devised to provide an early warning indicator of the presence of robo-choppers. "As for the font, that was definitely inspired by the one I saw in *Escape From New York*, my favourite film of the time," says Steve. Unsurprisingly, some of the general design decisions in the game

"I WANTED A GAME THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DO IN REAL LIFE – FUN WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART, I WASN'T CONCERNED WITH EMULATING REALITY" STEVE ON HIS INFLUENCES

## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**SUICIDE MISSION**
SYSTEM: ATARI 2600
YEAR: 1982

**SLIME**
SYSTEMS: ATARI 400/800/XL/XE, C64
YEAR: 1982

**DIMENSION X** (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: ATARI 400/800/XL/XE
YEAR: 1984



» When Fort Apocalypse blew up, our ace suddenly wondered whether his helicopter was blast proof.



» 'Really bad places for a helicopter pilot to navigate in *Fort Apocalypse*' – number one in a series of about 40 billion.



# THE MAKING OF... FORT APOCALYPSE

## CONVERSION CAPERS

Seasoned *Fort Apocalypse* fans will be well aware that the game made its way on to the Commodore 64 – a conversion that actually became more well-known than the original. "It was a great conversion, and it even had some of the same bugs," recalls Steve, adding: "Joe Vierra did it in about a month." What few people are aware of is how close *Fort Apocalypse* came to appearing on 16-bit systems. "I drew up plans for a sequel in 1988. I was part of a small start-up, and we'd done some initial development on an Amiga version," says Steve. The game would have been bigger and better than the original, although still based around the concept of underground exploration. Co-op play was a key new feature, along with improved AI. Sadly, financial pressures forced Steve to pull out, although the start-up continued on without him, and became a world-renowned developer. "It was Maxis," reveals Steve. "And Will Wright's first game was *SimCity*…"

were dictated by limited hardware, but Steve always considered constraints a means of inspiring creative solutions. "The colour choices were basic, bold RGB, but then I like bright, overdriven colour, and my later games have similarly simple colour choices," he says. "The chunky nature of the graphics was down to hardware restrictions – try drawing a running man in an eight-by-eight pixel block. You don't have too many choices."

Although an iconic-looking and challenging game that feels very complete, Steve recalls a couple of pitfalls during development that massively changed how the game was resolved, compared to his original concept. The first involved difficulty levels, and was a positive, necessary step. Despite *Fort Apocalypse* being tough, Steve admits that the first level of the original version, shown at CES (the Consumer Electronics Show), was almost impossible to play: "The walls of the caverns were very close. I went to the show and stood in the background, watching people. Eventually, Synapse's founder convinced me to open things up and make the first level easier – and I'm glad that I did."

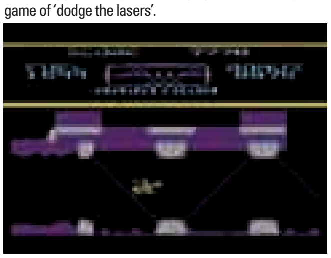
Unfortunately, the second major change was something of a spanner in the works; Steve simply ran out of space to fully realise his game, and something had to give: levels – and lots of them. "I had originally wanted to do 50, and wanted to sell the game on disk or cassette, but Synapse wanted to make a cartridge version," he recalls. This 16 KB restriction massively limited the scope of Steve's plans, forcing him to cut all but two of his levels. Frustratingly, because of an operating-system change in the Atari XL, Steve also discovered that when the first 5,000 cartridges were received by Synapse, none of them worked anyway, and so, ironically, the company ended up selling only disk and cassette versions of the game. It, therefore, hardly comes as a surprise that Steve's answer to 'If you could turn back time, what would you do differently with the game?' is a wearisome reply about creating a disk version, with a much more involved storyline. He reveals that before the format decision was made, ten of the levels were already in the bag planning-wise – Steve had figured out how the game would progress, meticulously designing the various different caverns and foes on graph paper. "But Level 2 became the final level after I realised that there was simply no more room," says Steve, sadly. "I've read that some novelists create characters and a situation and then the story writes itself – I guess this game followed that mode."

While this limitation was undoubtedly maddening for Steve at the time, knowing what he had planned could prove similarly trying for devoted fans of the game, so look away now, readers, if you don't want to know what might have been. "I had ideas about bases of robo-choppers departing – and the final battle would have involved a swarm of choppers chasing the player. You had to be a much better pilot to get out," says Steve. Along with improving the AI, Steve originally wanted a much more evolving storyline throughout: "I'd designed different puzzles for each level – I had ideas for all kinds of interesting brain-teasers. I considered having keys to unlock sections of the game, and I also wanted to have bosses. They didn't




» The fashion-conscious Kralthan's had, cleverly, colour co-ordinated its tanks with the surrounding landscape.

» Invalidate that warranty in style: fly your brand-new robo-chopper underground and play an exhilarating game of 'dodge the lasers'.



» As we took in the dreary underground architecture, the surprisingly mobile, huge green block tried to annihilate our helicopter.




» Tsk! It's always the same – you're about to nip out in your helicopter, and someone else has left it with an empty tank.






» The 'land here' sign is useful, although 'die here, here and here' signs would be more accurate of the gaming experience.

have a name like that then, but that's what they were. So many ideas, without a chance of implementing them…"

Despite the limitations Steve faced and the obvious disappointment in not being able to fully realise his original vision, *Fort Apocalypse* was nonetheless a success, and well received at the time. For the early Eighties, it's a quite sophisticated production – something of a hybrid, rather than fitting neatly into a specific genre. It's certainly a lot more cerebral than an out-and-out blaster, yet more arcade oriented than a typical exploration game. "I don't really have any memory of trying to make something specific – it was only later that I realised I had used various archetypes in the design," admits Steve.

We mention that other games designers of the era also hit upon this mix-and-match approach, although mostly by pure luck, and Steve considers this an interesting point: "The fact that other people who developed games in the early Eighties say the same sort of thing tells me that, including myself, we were exploring the medium, with no particular want or desire to stylise it. I've always believed that constraints lead to creative results. Most likely, that's why unique things happened."

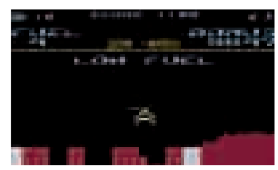
For Steve, his personal tastes included both arcades and puzzles, and he thinks this led to a number of the design decisions he made while working on the game. "Certainly, it was a trend around that time. Friends of mine who were also into making games were doing similar things – *Protector*, for example," he says. "The games industry back then was a very supportive social experience, especially in the San Francisco Bay area – I'd go to gatherings and show off what I was doing, and so would others, and we'd end up 'blending' ideas. It was a very different time from today."

Despite the major shifts in the industry, Steve's not disheartened with how things have turned out. He not only has great memories of his time working on *Fort Apocalypse*, where even bugs sometimes yielded great results – "The double-rocket, that's your weapon, is a bug, but I thought it looked cool." – but he's also excited about the prospects of continuing to work within the industry. "Games are in my blood," he concludes. "I've been involved in the mobile games industry now since 1999, specifically doing games for the past two. I've got to build five games in that time, and they all came from the heart."

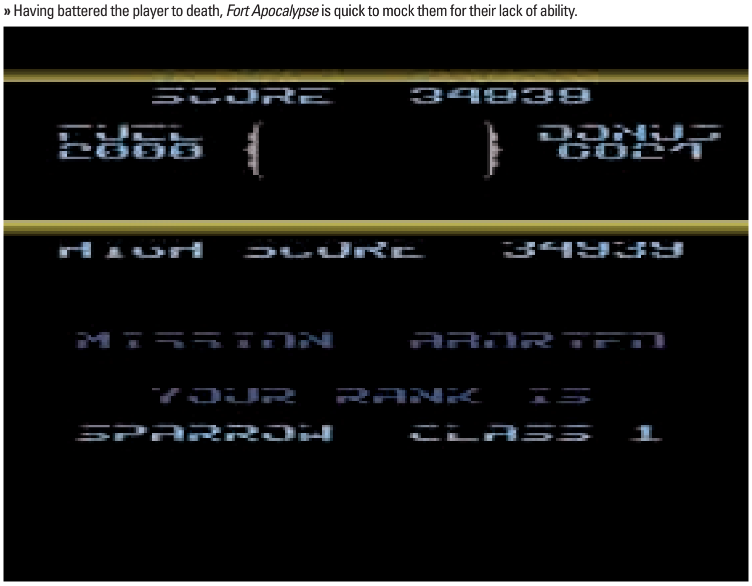
**"I'D DESIGNED DIFFERENT PUZZLES – I HAD IDEAS FOR ALL KINDS OF INTERESTING BRAIN-TEASERS… I CONSIDERED HAVING KEYS TO UNLOCK SECTIONS OF THE GAME"** STEVE ON WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN HAD THERE BEEN SPACE

## MOBILE APOCALYPSE

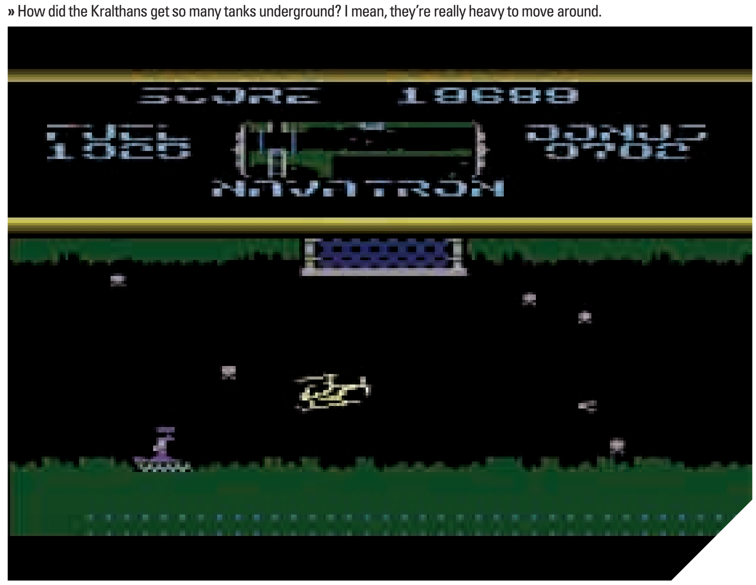
*Fort Apocalypse* may find a new lease of life on mobile for the T-Mobile Sidekick (see www.poweredbydanger.com/catalog/6/35/1330 for a catalogue entry and www.big-itch.com/fort/sk/ for more on the game). Brian Hales – Steve's cousin – is responsible for the port. "Brian wanted to do a version of *Fort* that was his, and unique; he did the level design, graphics and coding, and I worked on audio and gave playback commentary," says Steve. Brian reckons the port has faithful elements: "It uses bitmap graphics and sound from the Atari version." However, some changes were made, to make it a new experience: "As we're no longer restricted by the Atari's limitations, we've created a much larger area to explore – seven levels that span 1,000 device-sized screens." Unsurprisingly, the game is still rock hard – "I pleaded with Brian to make it easier," jokes Steve – although there are checkpoints in place, providing direct access to deeper levels once they have been discovered.




» Having battered the player to death, *Fort Apocalypse* is quick to mock them for their lack of ability.




» How did the Kralthans get so many tanks underground? I mean, they're really heavy to move around.



# RETRORATED

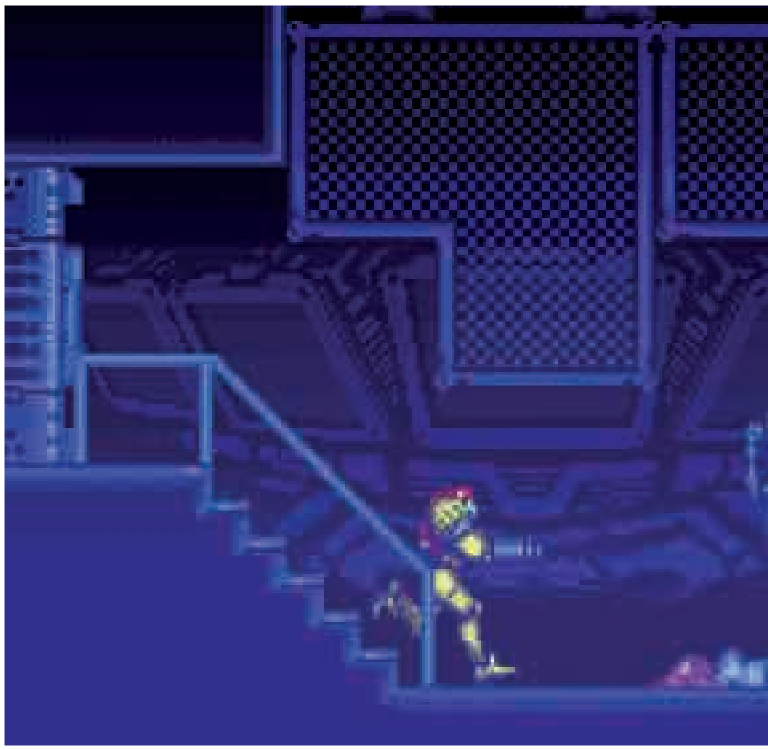



94 **SUPER METROID**

95 **SUPER CONTRA**

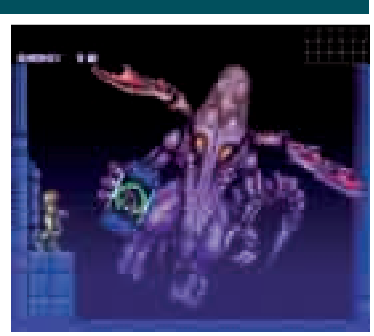
95 **LANDSTALKER**

## SUPER METROID



» 'And tonight, Mathew, I'm going to be… Samus Aran.





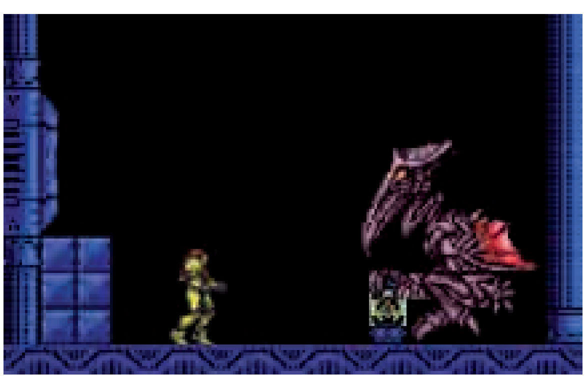
### INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO

» **COST:** 800 POINTS

**It's funny how the world gets all excited over old games suddenly remerging onto new consoles, after all, if we want to play *Super Metroid*, we're a breed of gamer who would simply plug in a SNES and away we go.**

But for all the retro gaming newbies out there, yes, the long wait is finally over. We've caught up with those fortunate Americans and finally we get our clammy mitts all over Samus Aran, via a Wii Remote of course. *Super Metroid* has proved itself to be the most popular Virtual Console download in the United States since the service began, and it comes as no surprise to us, considering it's one of the Super Nintendo's finest titles. The beauty of *Super Metroid* is that it offers so much and asks for so little.



» We've got one word for you: Ugly.

It's so self-effacing that nothing about it ever feels pre-meditated, it's a world that feels like it's been buried for ages, one you're slowly etching away at with its superlative gameplay and sheer enormity. It's a game that doesn't show you where to dig it, but rather it gives you a beautiful spade with an arm turret for you to graft with. In fact it's so good it's making us spout pretentious psychobabble.

But it's also a game that puts you in your place. Its first act will have you licking your wounds after an impossible boss battle. But those early failings as a bounty hunter have been put there intentionally to fuel the trip into its finest narrative lure: retribution.

Admittedly, we're probably getting slightly too enamoured with the game here, but it's difficult. Its fertile world juxtaposed against the empty, dank backdrop of space, and the meticulous attention to detail that Nintendo put into the game's visuals are nothing short of staggering, even today. Never has a character felt so intuitive or a game so immersive. For many, including your reviewer here, *Super Metroid* marks the zenith of the series. And if you missed it when it was first released in 1993, we certainly suggest downloading it via Virtual Console immediately.

**PRESENTATION: 92%** Luverly Jubbley, *Metroid* is perfectroid.

**AESTHETICS: 92%** Sense grabbing from the second it loads to the final credit rolls

**PLAYABILITY: 93%** It feels great, intuitive and responsive

**LONGEVITY: 99%** The sequence breaking and perfect score challenge, yup ages

**VALUE FOR MONEY: 100%** It's worth ten times that amount (actually, scrap that, we wouldn't want to give Nintendo any more bright ideas)

**OVERALL 95%**

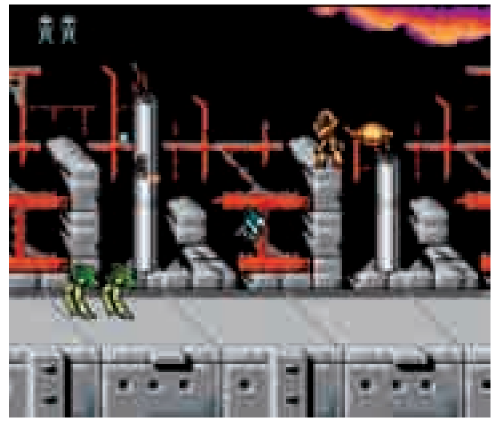
## SUPER CONTRA AKA PROBOTECTOR II: RETURN OF THE EVIL FORCES

### INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
» **COST:** 500 POINTS

**After the particularly abysmal arcade port of this game on Xbox Live, you know, the one that Digital Eclipse adorned with all those stupid-looking cheesy flyer-art borders which Darran said remind him of potato pressings, it's Virtual Console's turn to have a swing at the game.** Thankfully, like a peculiar blessing in disguise – because the NES was on sale when *Contra 2* hit the arcades – it boasts its own near arcade port, and, doubly thankfully, this is the version that Nintendo has selected to make available for download.

Now, while it's eclipsed in every way, shape and hovering power-up by the superlative *Contra 3: The Alien Wars*, *Probotector 2* is still a game that offers a fair slice of enjoyable run-and-gun action, especially for fans of the series. Like the arcade incarnation, it's a tough nut to blow up but it has some nice features, such as the top-down blaster sections, that really make it feel like a precursor to the SNES classic. And if you can forgive Konami for ousting Bill and Lance for robots with giant ankles, you'll be in gunner's heaven.





» Ahh, back to more familiar jungle surroundings.



» A propeller-less helicopter! No wonder he's jumping

**PRESENTATION: 85%** Does the job to be fair, and it's void of a border drawn with potatoes and duffness, which is always nice

**AESTHETICS: 86%** It actually feels a lot more menacing than the arcade game, but that is just our opinion

**PLAYABILITY: 90%** It's a toughie but repeated play will find you overcoming the swarm of bullets in no time

**LONGEVITY: 88%** Let's put it this way, you won't walk it

**VALUE FOR MONEY: 78%** It's a nice little NES classic, a sure-fire hit with *Contra* fanboys

**OVERALL 85%**

## LANDSTALKER

### INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** CLIMAX ENTERTAINMENT
» **COST:** 800 POINTS

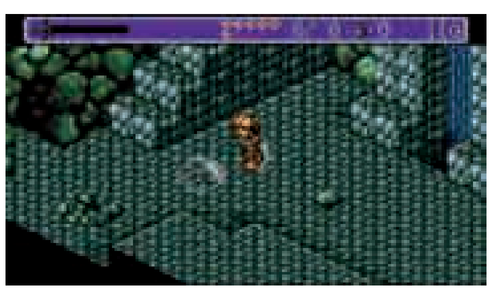
**Ahh the isometric *Landstalker*, some see it as a classic RPG, others a 45-degree annoy-'em-up with sucky fighting and giant contact lenses. Although we're not massive fans of the game, we do see why many regard it as a classic.** Its wonderfully colourful characters, enchanting backdrops and grand cacophony pretty much sum up all the essential elements of a great role-playing adventure. However, where the game falls hard on its arse is its perspective, which can sometimes permeate the action with scenery blind-spots and make jumping and trying to hack an enemy into canapés a tad frustrating. It was seen as a top trump armament against Zelda back in those 16-bit playground spats, and despite being within camp Sega, we'd always pity the deluded school chump that staunchly compared it to Myamoto's masterpiece. We'd always summon the powers of *Streets Of Rage 2* or even *Ecco* – despite it being a wussy game about a dolphin – but shirked in the corner when RPG's entered the mix, and we'd never pull a cheap shot like *Landstalker*, no way, that would be videogame suicide. Anyway, despite a few niggles, it's an enjoyable enough adventure that anyone longing for an old-school RPG will surely get a kick out of, but it's bettered in every way by the superlative *Story of Thor*.




» Proof that Mr T was popular back in 12BC, or whenever this game is set.



» We're not sure that bird hasn't had a few gallons of Dutch courage, judging by the glazed expression over his face



» Yes, a bubble. This is quite possibly the most unimaginable and least likely enemy of man.

**PRESENTATION: 90%** Beautifully presented. The great intro involves your hero travelling on Giant Bird Airlines

**AESTHETICS: 84%** Its awesome soundtrack will have you humming into the night, and people staring at you

**PLAYABILITY: 80%** Combat can be a bit fiddly, and the gameplay a tad repetitive

**LONGEVITY: 86%** It'll certainly take a while to finish

**VALUE FOR MONEY: 87%** It's pricey but is a nice little old-school RPG that doesn't involve waiting turns and reading a mountainous amount of text

**OVERALL 88%**

# HOMEBREW RATED

WE DISCOVER WHAT'S AT THE VERY TOP OF THE ICY TOWER AND TAKE A GANDER AT A REMAKE OF KARATE CHAMP

## ICY TOWER

"BENJAMIN, I AM NOT TRYING TO SEDUCE YOU"

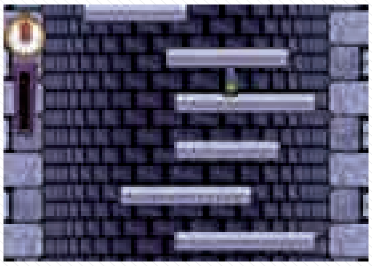


**FORMAT:** PC
**DEVELOPED BY:** FREE LUNCH DESIGN
**RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
**LINK:** WWW.ICYTOWER.UNAS.CZ
**PRICE:** FREE
**REVIEWED BY:** STUART HUNT

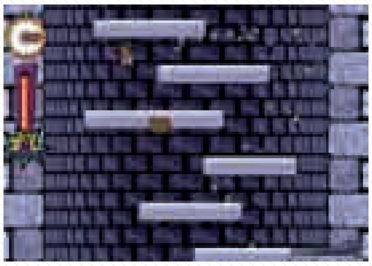
**Why are the simplest of games always the most addictive? It's almost like your brain doesn't like to be overcooked. It doesn't like processing beautiful images, cinematic storylines and complicated control systems, so, when a game answers the door, leads you upstairs and exposes its wares within a second of pressing its doorbell your brain deploys strange addiction-pheromones.** *Icy Tower* is a brazen hussy of a game; it's a temptress of time and a neglecter of work. Okay, well perhaps I'm being a little bit blinkered by those addiction-pheromones, but it is a pretty darn enjoyable game.

It's a vertically climbing platform game that see's you control either a chap who looks like Andy Capp, if Trinny and Susannah ever got their shiny claws into him, or that guy from *Undercover Brother.* And it's your job to help him escape Icy Tower before the bottom of the screen swallows him up.

With only three controls: left, right and jump, the game won't take long to get to grips with, and its gameplay is equally rudimentary. You must make your bid for freedom by frantically leaping from the platforms that protrude from inside the tower's wall. The faster you make your character run; the higher he will jump. Handily, meeting the peak of your character's jumping prowess will find him maintain his height and allow you to chain jumps together to scale the tower quicker.



» Andy Capp was pondering whether to change his name to Andy Beanie.



» Harold's dancing could clear a room quicker than anthrax.

The game's difficulty is particularly well balanced; with the speed that Mr Death Camera pans up the screen increasing in relation to the height that you climb. The gameplay, as you've probably guessed, has this appealing pick-up-and-play vibe, and the graphics have this bright, acidic Amiga feel to them. With a neat, if somewhat, superfluous replay mode, a lot of thought seems to have been wielded throughout. If you're looking for an instantly gratifying platform game then this one is definitely a great little ice breaker.

**PRESENTATION: 84%** More *Austin Powers* than *Icy Towers.*

**AESTHETICS: 84%** It has a really vivid, eye-grabbing feel to it.

**PLAYABILITY: 85%** It's extremely simple and extremely playable.

**LONGEVITY: 87%** High-score chasers will find a lot of life in it.

**VALUE FOR MONEY: 89%** It's free, so it has excellent value.

**OVERALL: 86%**

## KARATE CHAMP REMAKE

"FEAR DOES NOT EXIST IN THIS DOJO, DOES IT?" "NO, SENSEI!"



**FORMAT:** PC
**RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
**DEVELOPED BY:** DVT SOFTWARE
**LINK:** HTTP://DAVIDVAZ.BLOGSPOT.COM/
**PRICE:** FREE
**REVIEWED BY:** STUART HUNT

**Remember that scene in *The Karate Kid* where Ralph Macchio is balancing on a pole trying to perfect his crane technique? He comically stumbles on his first few attempts, gets enraged and threatens to report Miyagi to the International Karate Council for his questionable teachings.** Miyagi, cool as a cryogenically frozen cucumber, would then dampen his aggression with a riddle-soaked sentence; something like, "First learn stand, then learn fly. Nature rule, Daniel-san, not mine." He would then sweeten the deal by giving him a car, or a new karate gi with an embroidery of a bonsai tree on the back.

Well, *Karate Champ* felt like an unorthodox fighting game. One that asked you to practice the art of combat using a surreal method that made you half expect the arcade owner to reveal himself as Jeremy Beadle. Developed by Technos (*Double Dragon*, *River City Ransom*), *Karate Champ*'s cab housed two joysticks and no fire buttons. Can you imagine playing Street Fighter II without a punch button? It'd be like trying to pilot a MiG Fighter with a Master System control pad, or playing snooker with a breadstick.

Well one of the earliest one-on-one beat-'em-ups has recently been given a PC update, and its somewhat ambidextrous control system has been fully restored. This new revision also retains the original's ippon scoring system, but adds pixilated blood, refines a few of the moves and is packed with neat action replays that satisfyingly zoom in on the winning blow.

The graphics themselves are drawn in with a clunky pixilated pen, which I can't really say feels like any kind of improvement on the original, but I don't think that was the intention. The rough, blocky exterior of the fighters hides a real sense of fluidity, as well as increasing the amount of tongue rammed into the cheek of this update.

Obviously the real test for this game comes from how well it plays, but fear not, because substituting joystick jolts for key punching actually works very well, and gives you a shade more immediacy and control over the fighters.

It's a great little update that will take a bit of effort to master, but like Miyagi would say, 'First learn joystick left, then learn joystick right. Technos' rule, readers, not mine.'



» The replays really rub salt into those empty gum sockets.

**PRESENTATION: 90%** Imagine *Roland On The Ropes* meets *IK+.*

**AESTHETICS: 85%** It's a solid remake.

**PLAYABILITY: 89%** It's very playable, and the two-player spats are enjoyable.

**LONGEVITY: 88%** It's not easy, and does take a while to master.

**VALUE FOR MONEY: 90%** Um, once again it's free, so very good value.

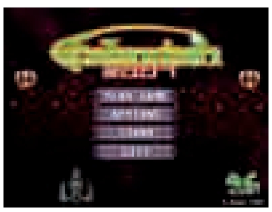
**OVERALL: 88%**

THE HOMEBREW SECTION GOES SHOOT-'EM-UP CRAZY AS WE TAKE A LOOK AT REMAKES OF GALAXIAN AND THE PICKFORD BROTHERS' ZUB

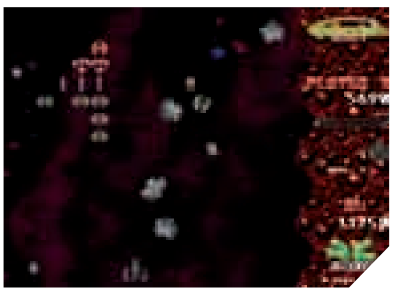
# GALAXIAN 2007

## "ARE YOU KIDDING? IT'S WAR UP THERE"

**FORMAT:** PC
**DEVELOPED BY:** ACODERS
**RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
**LINK:** WWW.ACODERS.COM
**PRICE:** FREE
**REVIEWED BY:** STUART HUNT



**I've always preferred Namco's treatment of space invading. Don't get me wrong, Taito gets plenty of kudos from me for setting up the stall, but by tweaking the gameplay to allow the kamikaze aliens to peel off and whiz towards your ship, *Galaxian* continually kept me on my heels.** You were constantly reacting to enemies with a seemingly blasé attitude towards their own survival. They were so unpredictable that they would steer their little bug-looking ships into yours if it meant creating a pretty-looking explosion.

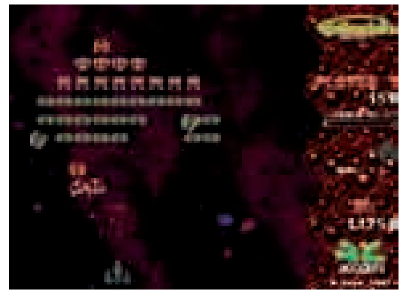


» The meteorite shower. It's how the Incredible Hulk washes himself.

Well, the game has been updated for the year 2007, and its back story has been tweaked. This time you play an intergalactic policeman with a duty to protect planets from marauding invaders. We're not told which planet we're supposedly protecting but I hope for humanities sake it's not Earth because it's an assignment that I'm utter rubbish at.

The game is essentially *Galaxian* in its execution: your little avatar can only move from left to right, and fires statically at a regiment of intergalactic foes that fragment and follow a regime of swirling, darting and firing, but the gameplay and aesthetics have been tweaked to try and invigorate the original formula. According to Acoder's website, the game was reputed to have taken just a week to make, and while it's a sterling effort, I believe that there are areas of the gameplay that could have benefited from the odd tweak here and there.

While the new power-ups do well to quickly eradicate the hordes before they splinter off and loiter at the base of the screen, the chunky new sprites give a sense of cosiness to the action, which means that the all-important quick-draw precision element of the original doesn't really come into play.



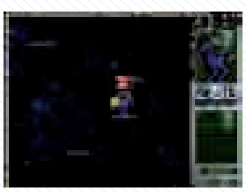
» Better prepare to greet the Game Over screen.

Personally, I would have liked to have seen more effort taken to replicate iconic aspects of the original, like the insect-looking enemy ships, those wicked explosions your ship made and those cool yellow bullets that would form the front of your avatar, as without any of these it kind of feels like a watery remake.

**PRESENTATION: 73%** Looks fine enough, but nothing like *Galaxian*.
**AESTHETICS: 74%** Doesn't really feel like you're playing *Galaxian*.
**PLAYABILITY: 70%** It plays okay, but nothing like *Galaxian*.
**LONGEVITY: 89%** It's a tough nut to crack, but not as tough as *Galaxian*.
**VALUE FOR MONEY: 95%** It's free so 100%, and the *Galaxian* cab can be pricey.
**OVERALL: 75%**

# ZUB

## "YOU WON'T ZUB ME THIS TIME YOU... ZUBS"



**FORMAT:** PC
**DEVELOPED BY:** RICHARD JORDAN
**RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
**LINK:** WWW.RETROSPEC.SGN.NET
**PRICE:** FREE
**REVIEWED BY:** STUART HUNT

**Responsible for banging together the fertile heads of Ste and John Pickford, *Zub* was a project that allowed the pair to finally team up and germinate an original game concept from scratch.** While immediately, that fact alone makes *Zub* a classic in the eyes of many, for me it's one of the earliest examples of a game plagued by style over substance. With its main sprite not only harnessing most of the development time, but also most of the available RAM of the Speccy back in 1986, the game suffered from dark empty backdrops and repetitious level design.

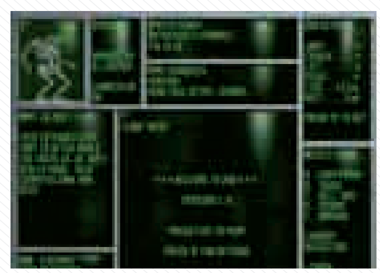
Ste and John have admitted that the game was released in a somewhat unfinished state, and at the risk of being pilloried I would be first in line to champion the attention to detail that went into certain areas of the game: the hidden Lightface Easter egg for one, and the jaw-dropping animations (to keep a sense of consistency your little sprite would flip the gun from each hand when he turned left to right).

Playing a genetically modified, gangly looking soldier, it was your job to traverse ten planets to recover the lost Green Eye of Zub. You make your way from the foot to the top of the screen, where a teleporter awaits to send you to your next destination. Each of the game's levels differed only in the look of the hovering platforms that littered their screens and the handful of enemies that would pester your plight.



» Zub quickly regretted peeing on the force-field.

Richard Jordan is obviously a very big fan of the original look, and for his remake seems to have constructed it using similar binary. He's included the original swirling, text-heavy menu screen and kept the iconic gorky look of *Zub*. Even his screen-hogging health bar, which showed the character having his head and skin slowly etched away to expose a strange body of bones, has been lovingly restored. However, I would have liked to have seen Richard tweak a few aspects of the gameplay and leave his own mark on the game.



» Busy, busy, busy.

For fans, this remake is worth tracking down. It's a great homage to a well-loved classic, a sentiment bolstered by Richard and co's affectionate and unsullied handling of this redux.

**PRESENTATION: 86%** The Pickford's original still looks great.
**AESTHETICS: 84%** It retains the look and feel of the original perfectly.
**PLAYABILITY: 80%** Personally, the game does become a tad tiresome.
**LONGEVITY: 87%** Boasting online high-score posting gives more life to the game.
**VALUE FOR MONEY: 96%** It's cheaper than knocked-off oxygen.
**OVERALL: 85%**

# MAGIC MUSHROOMS

DON'T WORRY. THEY'RE PERFECTLY LEGAL



- » **PUBLISHER:** ACORNSOFT
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** BBC MICRO
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+



## HISTORY

**One thing I've learnt from watching the excellent *House MD* is that people lie. All the time. But then I've known that for quite a while now. Hugh Laurie's portrayal of the surly doctor simply reaffirmed it.**

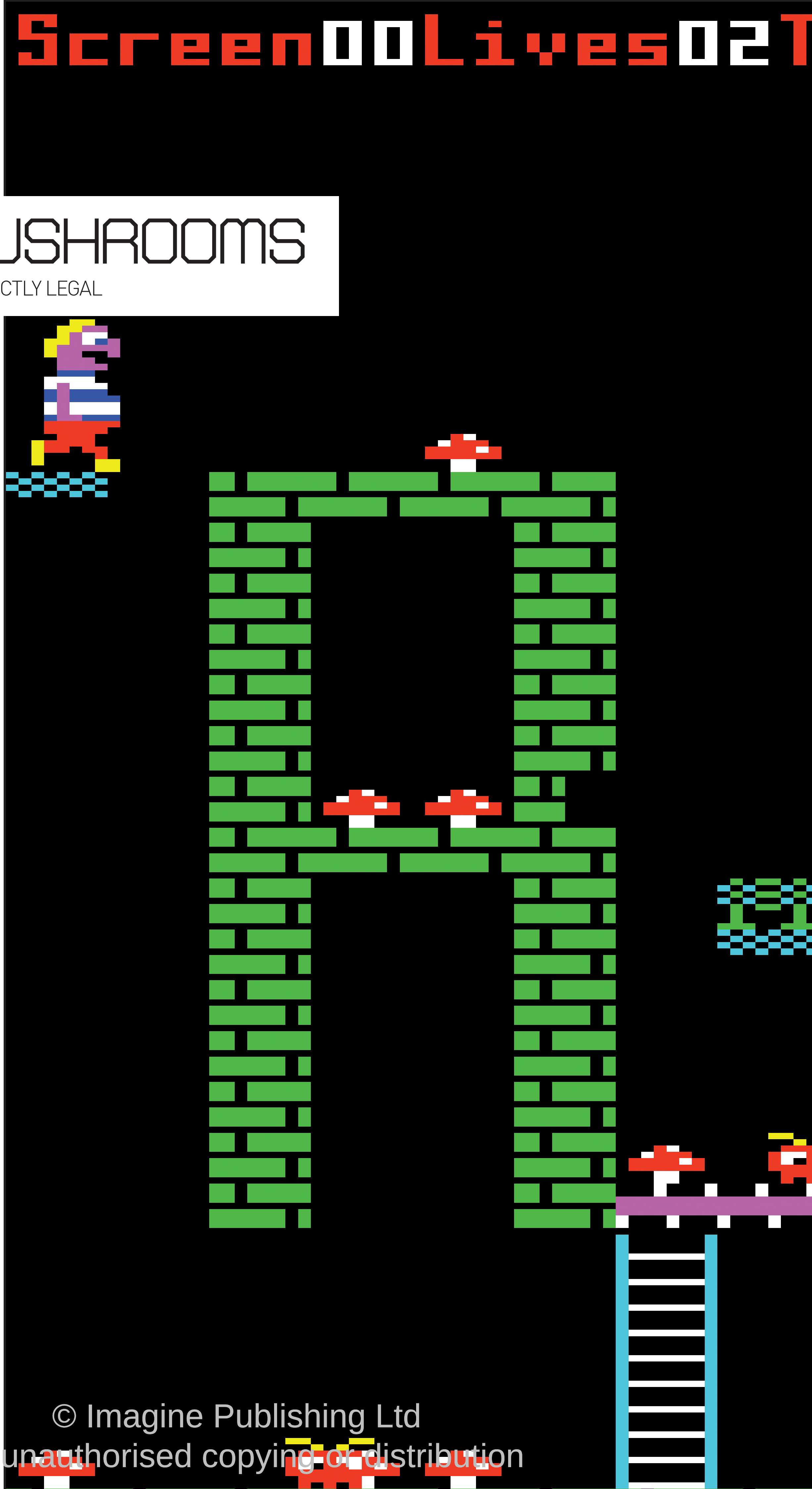
Case in point, two old school-friends of mine – who, to spare their blushes, will remain nameless – lied through their back teeth and convinced me that they had made this amazing new BBC computer game called *Magic Mushrooms*, or '*Fruity Frank*' as they liked to call it.

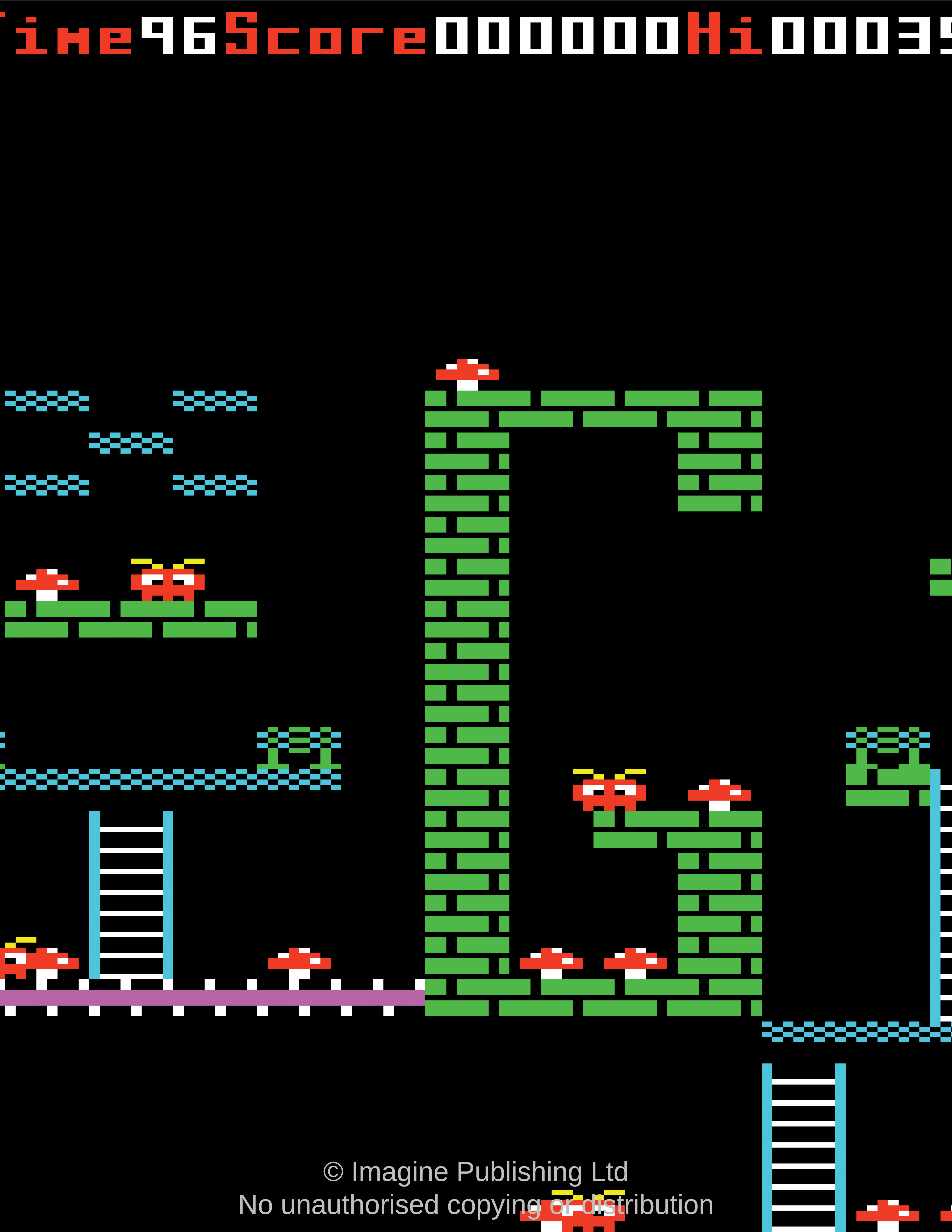
There I was, 12 years old, sitting in friend A's messy bedroom and watching in wonder as he guided Fatman (as they called him) around an intricately designed screen. He made the chunky sprite avoid nasty red meanies, jump over ladders, run across conveyor belts, and all the while he was busily collecting as many mushrooms as possible. I was mesmerised by what was happening in front of me and wondered (not for the first time) if I had been right in asking my nan for an Amstrad CPC 464, when everyone else appeared to have far better computers.

Of course, many, many years later and I now realise that my friends hadn't created *Magic Mushrooms* at all, they had just been messing around with its rather spiffy level editor. (I've kindly created my own totally unplayable level on the right for you all to admire.)

I've also discovered since, that *Magic Mushrooms* is far from the high point of the BBC library, and that there are far better platformers available on the underrated computer. And yet, for some reason, I constantly find myself returning to this infuriatingly tough game, if only so I can complete the swine of a level that is Curse Of The Lemming.

I may have been conned into loving *Magic Mushrooms* – how could I not love any game made by some friends? – and I certainly felt foolish when I finally discovered the truth several months later, but I'd also discovered a brand-new game to enjoy with one of the most entertaining level editors around. How could you possibly get too mad about that?




ime96Score000000Hi0003

# BARGAIN HUNT

## HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japanese auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over a hundred different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it.

### RETRO AUCTION WATCH

**Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. As you may have noticed, we've changed the theme recently and are looking at specific categories. This month: Mega Drive Shoot-'em-ups**

**THUNDER FORCE III**
Normally sells for **£15**
Ended at **£25.67**



**SUBTERRANIA**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£1.75**



## 3DO



**3DO GOLDSTAR**
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**

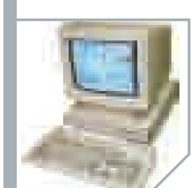


**PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)**
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**

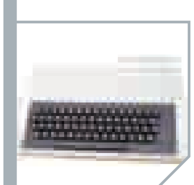


**PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)**
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released.
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

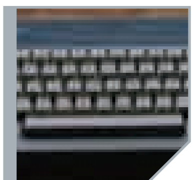
## ACORN



**ARCHIMEDES**
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) with games**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



**ATOM**
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



**ACORN ELECTRON**
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).

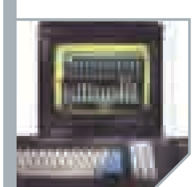


**BBC MICRO**
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

## AMSTRAD



**CPC 464**
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built-in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor.



**CPC 664**
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($165+)**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



**CPC 6128**
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- GET DEXTER
- XOR
- SORCERY +



**GX4000**
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

## APPLE

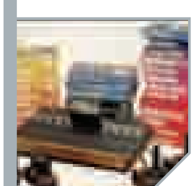


**APPLE II**
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) with games**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

## ATARI



**400/800/600XL/XE**
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



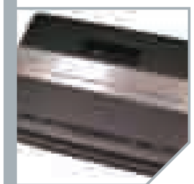
**2600 (VCS)**
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

# RARITY GUIDE

●●●●● ROCKING HORSE SHIT
●●●● HEN'S TEETH
●●● LUCKY FIND
●● EBAY REGULAR
● CAR-BOOT SALE BARGAIN



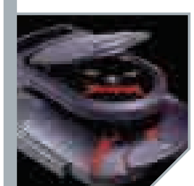
### 5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY ●●●●
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.
- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



### 7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.
- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES




### JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY ●
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!
- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



### JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY ●●●●
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!
- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD

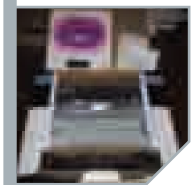


### LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



### ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ●
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**
This is an Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models available, of various specifications.
- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

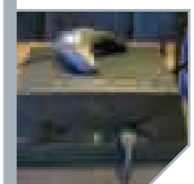
## BANDAI



### GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY ●●●●●
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) prices fluctuate wildly**
Ultra-rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



### PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY ●●●●●
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.
- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



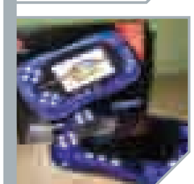
### PIPPIN (ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY ●●●●●
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. Its high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



### WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



### WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



### WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.
- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

## COMMODORE



### AMIGA500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ●
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) more with games, depending on model**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models with differing specs. The Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.
- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



### C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY ●●●
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**
The less well-known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.
- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



### C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY ●
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
One of the best-selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.
- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



### C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ●●●●
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.
- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND

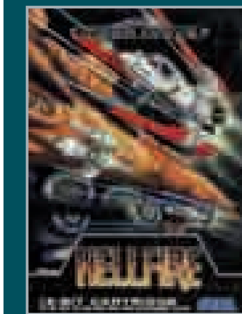


### C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ●●●
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

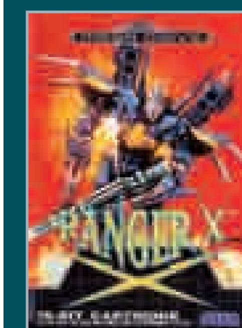


### CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ●●●●
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

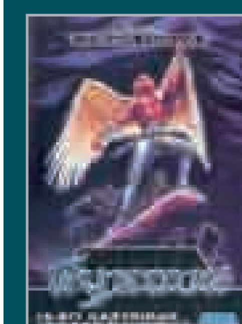
**HELLFIRE**
Normally sells for: **£5**
Ended at **£9.01**



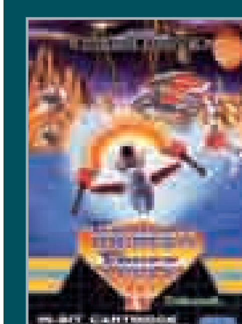
**RANGER X**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£4.23**



**GYNOUG**
Normally sells for **£3**
Ended at **£11.48**



**THUNDER FORCE IV**
Normally sells for **£8**
Ended at **£3.34**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



### CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



### VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**
The computer that established the Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

## FUJITSU

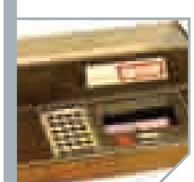


### FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**
Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



### FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**
A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

## MISCELLANEOUS



### BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



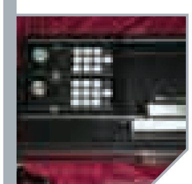
### BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**
Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
- SPIDER-MAN 3 - BLU-RAY
- THE WILD BUNCH - HD DVD
- 28 WEEKS LATER - BLU-RAY



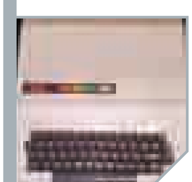
### CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
More insanity from the Land of the Rising Sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio had hoped it would do better than its PV-1000 console released in 1983.



### FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) from the USA**
The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



### COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**
Coleco's third-generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
- CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



### DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) very cheap on eBay**
Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived, though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



### ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Failed console by Emerson that had numerous different clones released, as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



### EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



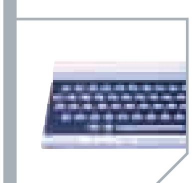
### EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, it was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



### INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**
Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



### ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act. Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



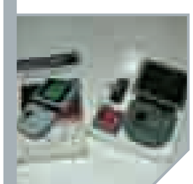
### ORIC-1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
The Oric-1 was a highly underrated 8-bit bit home computer created by Oric Products International. Despite having many games that were arguably superior to those on the Spectrum it was sadly unable to compete with the rival machine's high sales.
- XENON1
- INSECT INSANITY
- RAT SPLAT



### PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**
After manufacturing MSX machines, Sony re-entered the games hardware market and this time took it over. There are countless excellent PS games. It was later re-released as the PSone, which is more expensive but looks much nicer.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



### SAM COUPÉ
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) allegedly for a mint system**
Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupé was a unique 8-bit British home computer that didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



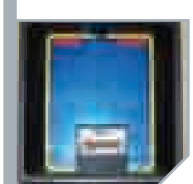
### SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.



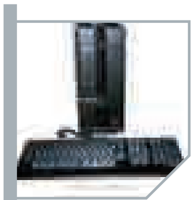
### TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



### TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Series of old computers by Tomy.



### VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



### X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.

- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

## MSX



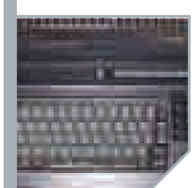
### MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.

- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



### MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent home-brew games are developed.

- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER



### MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.

- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



### MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.

- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

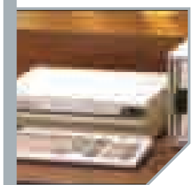
## NEC



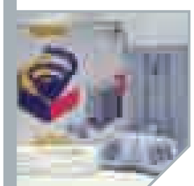
### PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of cool Japanese games for it. Released in the US as the NEC Trek. Be careful of shipping prices.



### PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



### PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.

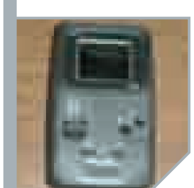


### PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.

- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



### PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



### PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



### TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two systems' Hu-Cards are not compatible.



### TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) massive fluctuations**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.

- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- PC KID
- OUTRUN



### SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) prices can fluctuate**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had six games specifically released for it.

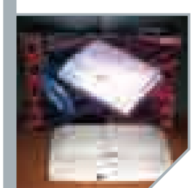
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



### PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PC-E and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



### PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PC-E/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.



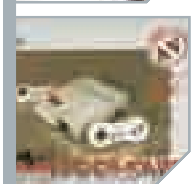
### DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped-down white version of the PC-E Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a six-button control pad.

- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

## NINTENDO



### FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over 1,000 games to choose from!



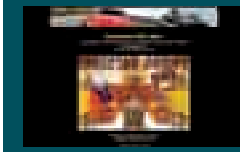
### FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



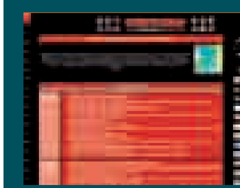
### FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

## RETRO GAMING SITES

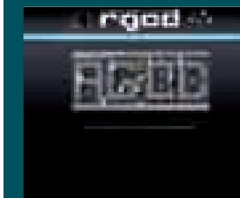
### HARDCORE GAMING 101
Hardcore Gaming is without doubt one of the most essential websites around. Filled with an astounding number of classic games and not afraid to run with truly obscure articles, it's a highly refreshing read that really puts many of the other bigger sites to shame.
Latest updates to the site include a look at SNK's *Samurai Shodown* series, classic doujin titles and Sega's greatly underrated *Miracle Warriors*.
**http://hg101.classicgaming.gamespy.com/index.html**

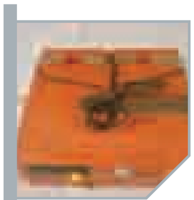


### DIGITAL PRESS
Digital Press may come across as just a website for hardcore collectors, but it's actually so much more. As well as keeping detailed lists of practically every machine you can think of, Digital Press also boasts an extremely friendly website, plenty of informative interviews and a store that covers everything from *Pong* to the PS3. An essential site for anyone interested in videogames.
**www.digitpress.com**



### RGCD
We'd have covered RGCD sooner, but we're only in ninth place on their links list. Seriously though, RGCD is a fanzine that focuses on the latest homebrew games. Put together by **RG** forumites, including Heavy Stylus and Dudley, it's a good read. A nice surprise from some fanzines that dedicate themselves to certain popular systems.
**www.rgcd.co.uk**





## SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



## GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yokoi.



## GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite its age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



## GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact Game Boy, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



## GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic Game Boy. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



## GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



## N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge-based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought-after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



## N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of its cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



## NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and it's very cheap too.



## NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72-pin based NES games work.
- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



## SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of the company's most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



## SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



## VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

# PHILIPS



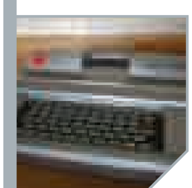
## CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from 1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips. The 200 series consists of front-loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



## CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) more with DVC**
This is the consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



## VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



## VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000 that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

# SEGA



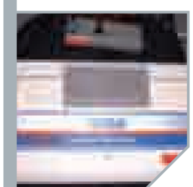
## 32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance its capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



## DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- SHENMUE
- SKIES OF ARCADIA
- REZ



## GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. With add-on tuner, could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



## SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history. The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



## SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



## MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



## AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) according to eBay**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



## TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad

hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



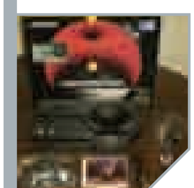
### MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.



### GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



### NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.
- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



### MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



### MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.
- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



### PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) more with games**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook-style boxes.
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



### SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse that, despite an amazing catalogue of games, never really took off.
- BURNING RANGERS
- RADIANT SILVERGUN
- PANZER DRAGOON SAGA

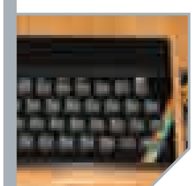
## SINCLAIR



### ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



### ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.
- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
- SABOTAGE



### ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



### ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



### ZX SPECTRUM+
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



### ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**

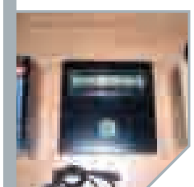


### ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, the Spectrum was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.
- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

## SNK



### NEO-GEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High-powered home system by SNK. Features many high-quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



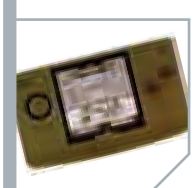
### NEO-GEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) multi-slot systems cost more**
High-powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home-based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of Neo-Geo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted.)
- METAL SLUG 3
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- BLAZING STAR



### NEO-GEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



### NEO-GEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based Neo-Geo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of Neo-Geo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.
- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHODOWN RPG



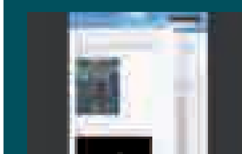
### NEO-GEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



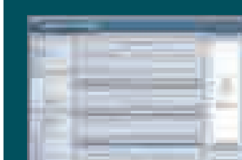
### NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld Neo-Geo systems by SNK that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system, though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

## RETRO GAMING SITES

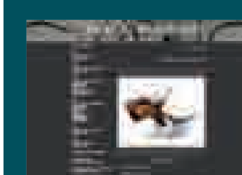
### MACRETRO
As the Macintosh continues to gain credence as a games machine, we felt it was more than appropriate to look at this great emulation site that's dedicated to playing old games on the Mac. There are emulators here for everything from the Acorn Archimedes to the ZX Spectrum and many of them are extremely easy to set up and use. There are even fairly in-depth notes on each system to enjoy. Just don't ask them where all the ROMZ are.
**www.macretro.tk**



### REPLACEMENT DOCS
We've all lost game manuals over the years, so a site that tries to document instruction books is bound to be popular. Pretty much every console and computer you can think of has support, and more are being added all the time. A great resource site.
**www.replacementdocs.com/news.php**



### THE ARTWORK OF PANZER DRAGOON
Until Sega releases *Panzer Dragoon Saga 2*, we'll just have to console ourselves by constantly revisiting this beautiful website. Pretty much all of the major art from the *Dragoon* series can be found here and all of it is absolutely stunning. This is one website that no *Panzer Dragoon* fan should be without.
**www.moonapples.com/lagi/**



Special thanks to **www.lofi-gaming.org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots



## OTHER EXCITING FEATURES…

- It's arguably one of the hardest games in the franchise, but for many, *Treasure Island Dizzy* remains a true classic. The Oliver twins reveal the secrets behind their number-one smash hit.
- Electronic Arts has been making computer games for a staggering 25 years, so we felt it was the perfect time to not only find out how the company started, but where it intends to be in another quarter of a century.
- It's hailed as one of the best text adventures of all time, but what makes *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* just so damned special? Creator Douglas Adams holds the answers.

retro GAMER

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## THE MAKING OF…

A POLITICAL HOT POTATO WHEN IT WAS FIRST RELEASED, ELECTRONIC ARTS' DESERT STRIKE: RETURN TO THE GULF NEVERTHELESS REMAINS ONE OF THE MEGA DRIVE'S MOST REWARDING TACTICAL SHOOTERS, AS OUR IN-DEPTH EXPOSÉ PROVES



# Desert Strike

# END/GAME

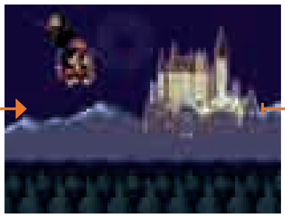


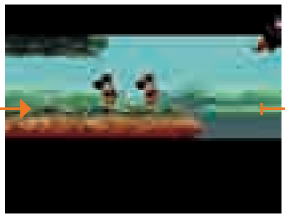
# CASTLE OF ILLUSION

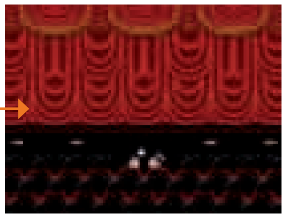
Eek! Poor old Minnie Mouse has been captured, and there is only one rodent brave enough to save her. But will the loveable Mickey be able to get to his girl in time?











SCREEN 1
Poor old Minnie. After being captured she is stuffed into a magic bubble by the evil witch Mizrabel. All that she can do is float around aimlessly and wait for Mickey to save her. Come on, Mickey, you can do it.

SCREEN 2
After a specific number of bottom bounces, the evil witch becomes susceptible to Mickey's strongest attack. Unleashing all of the gems he's found on his travels, Mickey hits her with the full force of a rainbow.

SCREEN 3
Take that you evil hag! After being transformed into a nice witch, Mizrabel repents and decides to give the two lovers a lift home on her broomstick. Fireworks explode in the sky as the pair look back at the Castle of Illusion.

SCREEN 4
After Mizrabel drops them off and says goodbye, the shy mice coyly look at each other before Minnie gives Mickey a much-deserved snog. We'd have wanted a whole lot more, but a kiss is better than nothing, and she is a mouse.

SCREEN 5
So it wasn't a game after all! As the music fades and Mickey and Minnie waltz off into the sunset, we suddenly discover that we're actually sitting in a huge cinema and we've been watching a movie all along. Brilliant.